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THROUGH A PADRE'S SPECTACLES

J. GOLDER BURNS C.F.



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THROUGH A PADRE'S SPECTACLES

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE CHOSEN TWELVE"

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TO THE
GALLANT SOLDIERS
MY
FRIENDS AND COMRADES
IN THE FIELD

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GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS MADE OF
THE KINDNESS OF THE REV. JOHN KEDDIE
GRAHAM, M.A., EDINBURGH, WHO, IN THE
ABSENCE OF THE AUTHOR ON SERVICE,
HAS UNDERTAKEN THE DUTIES INCIDENTAL
TO THE PREPARATION OF THIS VOLUME.

J.G.B.

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I

Germania Vorax

"Principalities and powers with something like a vested interest in darkness."—VISCOUNT MORLEY.

DURING the four weeks immediately prior to the outbreak of the world-war, the writer, in company with a friend, travelled by motor cycle from Zeebrugge to Geneva, thus following by anticipation the line of the subsequent western battle front. Leaving Zeebrugge we journeyed by Bruges, Roulers, and Menin to Lille, thence by Douai, Cambrai, St. Quentin and Laon to Rheims, thereafter through Chalons-sur-Marne and Bar-le-Duc and the outskirts of Verdun to Nancy, whence by Lunéville, St. Dié, the Vosges, Besancon and the Juras we arrived at Geneva. It was a singular coincidence. Needless to say the experiences of the journey have enabled us to follow the operations with a much keener interest, while the memory of those pleasant country districts and prosperous towns, as they were during the last few days of peace, has provided a realistic background for the events of the past two years of war.

Through a Padre's Spectacles

Many impressions were gathered, but what one recalls most vividly is that the people one conversed with on the way, Belgians, French, and Swiss, were all more or less looking for war. After the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne there crept into the newspapers such headlines as "A grave situation," "Is it war?" "Can a European conflagration be averted?" and so on. Thus the journals interpreted public feeling, an interpretation which was readily accepted. How different from the situation at home where the majority of the people, even to the very last, regarded a twentieth century war as outside the bounds of possibility. On the continent, on the other hand, the people, not less alive to the horrors which a modern war would entail—many of them remembered 1870—resigned themselves to the coming of war as if it were inevitable. Why? Because they knew that Europe had been trembling on the brink of war any time during the last fifteen years. They knew that Germany was spoiling for a fight, and that the murder of the heir to the Austrian throne was too good a pretext not to be turned to useful account.

Anyone who has taken even a cursory interest in affairs European during the past twenty years knows that this attitude of suspicion on the part of French and Belgians was quite justifiable. Short of shouting it from the house-tops, Germany had made it clear that she had two ends

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in view, Trade Supremacy and World Power. How commercial prosperity flowed in upon her from the days of the Franco-Prussian war onward is among the romances of modern times. Whether travelling abroad or remaining at home, the undeniable fact was continually being thrust upon one that commercially Germany was forging ahead. The writer has seen this for himself in the capitals and principal cities of every country in Europe, from Constantinople to Christiania and from Moscow to Madrid. He has stood by and looked as their commercial travellers, always keen to tap new districts, have stepped spick and span on board ship from the ports of North Africa and Asia Minor, and from the islands of the Ægean. "What is that?" he enquired of the captain of the ship in which he was voyaging, as a new and well-appointed vessel drew in alongside in the bay of Gibraltar. "That," was the reply, "is the new German opposition steamer." And what a shock one received a few years ago at New York harbour to find that British prestige in the matter of the leviathans of the Atlantic had for the present passed into German hands. The shock was not much less than that received somewhat later when Canadians of the North-West informed one that the German merchant beat the British in the skill and keenness with which he met their requirements. All which, of course, one could learn without leaving one's own

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city. During a time of trade difficulty among home manufacturers a commercial man said gaily to the writer in reply to the usual enquiry regarding his affairs, "Oh, I am not affected in the slightest. For several years I have handled nothing but German stuff."

And who will maintain that the Germans in seeking commercial supremacy were not pursuing a legitimate ideal? If by following Ruskin's twin maxims of conduct, "Industry and Frugality," in conjunction with intelligence and competence, their fame and influence were in the ascendant in the markets of the whole world, who would refuse them their reward? "If a man," says Emerson, "weaves a better basket or fashions a better plough than his neighbours, all the world will make a way to his dwelling, though he live in the depths of a forest." No one should grudge the German his commercial success, least of all he who, while "doing himself well" and having a good time, was forgetting to put first things first.

In any case the German was devoting part of his wealth to good use. In more senses than one to pass from any other European country into Germany was a step up. The genius of the people was stamped on everything that came within one's purview. It appeared in the organisation that prevailed everywhere, in the efficiency of the public services, and in the clean, business-like

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and courteous officials who managed them. Public buildings such as stations and post offices were being reconstructed on generous plans. In the principal towns money was being freely spent on making them healthy, happy and beautiful resorts, with the result, that with regard to such places as Hamburg, Frankfort, Dresden, Munich, Stuttgart, Cologne, to mention only a few, it may be admitted that it was a genuine pleasure to live in them. In short, had Germany been satisfied with trade interests that were advancing by leaps and bounds, all would have been well. Others might have been jealous, but any vestige of a conscience left to them would have warned them that their duty was not to nurture jarred ambitions or soured animosities, but to "go and do likewise."

But Germany had other ends in view besides trade supremacy. Partly owing to the traditional military leanings of the dominant Prussian caste, and partly owing to the nefarious doctrines which, taught by pseudo-philosophers, had permeated the public mind like a virus, she had adopted as one of her imperial mottoes, "World Power through Conquest." And so while she was re-building her post offices she was also enlarging her barracks. While she was erecting new railway stations she was also laying down on her neighbours' frontiers miles of sidings, "for the *manœuvres*," as a courteous railway official once gratuitously informed the writer. She was

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constructing larger locomotives, but also making bigger guns. She was furnishing a new mercantile marine, but she was also creating a powerful fleet. Behind her vast, peaceful, industrious populations one continually caught glimpses of marshalling legions and heard the echoing tramp of marching men. And by way of gathering up and giving expression to national sentiment, those in high places were continually rattling the sabre, and making loud-sounding speeches about war lords, shining armour and the destructive German sword.

It was never at any time difficult to frame an idea as to Germany's designs. Roughly, they included the drawing of the imperial cordon round the smaller European states on her western frontier, Belgium, Holland and Denmark, the acquisition of the larger part of Poland, the opening of the way through Turkey to the Orient, the reduction of France to the level of a third-rate power, and the removal of Britain from her pride of place as mistress of the ocean and the world's greatest colonising empire. The smaller European countries were not in any doubt regarding Germany's intention as far as it concerned themselves. In conversation with a shopkeeper in Copenhagen the writer remarked how favourably impressed he was with the city. "Yes," was the reply, "the city is all right and so is Denmark, if we could be sure that William would not pay us a

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visit one of these days." And every Belgian knew that if there was one thing more than another towards which Germany's covetous eyes were constantly turning, it was the splendid port of Antwerp, just as every Hollander gauged the Germans' dissatisfaction that his most typically national river, "The German Rhine," had to seek a way to the ocean through an alien country.

So too the zeal with which Germany's representatives gave themselves to the task of paving a way through Servia, Bulgaria and Turkey, towards the Near East, is notorious to anyone who has travelled in these countries. Returning from a tour in 1907, the writer set this down as one of his leading impressions. France and Russia were to be dealt with in due course, the result being the establishment of the Central Powers in a position of unassailable supremacy, with the Kaiser as the Overlord of Europe. Then, when the appointed hour struck there was to be "war with England." There is no doubt that during many years the outlook of the German people was being sedulously directed towards this eventuality. The writer, when a student at Göttingen, frequently sat at meals between two young German officers, who were then attending the army schools. The underlying basis of the courses of instruction, the mental preoccupation of the lecturers, the "atmosphere" of the classrooms was the "war with England." It might

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be five, ten, or even fifteen years before it came to pass, but its coming was a certainty. So they assured me in a callous, matter-of-fact fashion. And that was in 1898.

However sudden therefore may have seemed the outbreak of war in 1914—some called it a "bolt from the blue"—it was so in appearance only. In reality it was a natural and necessary result of preceding causes, the last stage in a normal process of development, which nothing short of a miracle could have averted. What no one foresaw was that the British Empire, through a combination of circumstances, much more favourable than she deserved, would find herself solidly on the side of magnanimity and honour, in company with powerful allies. We may be pardoned if, contrasting our slender military resources with the armed millions of the continental powers, we had reluctantly prepared ourselves to accept a minor *rôle* in any future European war. After all, this, too, was Bernhardt's view, who said that the English could never put more than two hundred thousand men on the continent, and even then they would be no use against first-class troops, but would be serviceable only for police work, maintaining lines of communication, and such-like duties. But like many other generally accepted doctrines of pre-war days, this, too, is among the conclusions which war has shown to be fallacious.

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By ways nothing short of wonderful, ways which not even the visionaries of two years ago would have dared to regard as possible, the "contemptible little army" has become a military machine of the first magnitude. A French priest, the head of a scholastic institution in St. Omer, had a right appreciation from the very first of the true significance of Britain's entry into the sphere of the struggle. "Ah, sir," he said to the writer, and he repeated the words a second time with great earnestness, "but for the coming of the British *all would have been lost.*"

The following pages are not an attempt at writing the history of military operations. They are merely a few jottings from a chaplain's notebook. Many opinions have been expressed regarding the chaplain's work, nearly all of them, he knows, much more complimentary than he deserves. None, however, has referred to the disabilities that attend his attempts at book-writing. These are well-nigh discouraging. On the one hand it would be sacrilege to set down a full account of his own work, because much of it is in the nature of personal intercourse, which is confidential in the highest degree. On the other it would be folly and impertinence to attempt to describe matters military, which are highly specialised affairs, belonging to the domain of those who have been sealed to the brotherhood of experts. There are thus a Scylla and a

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Charybdis to be avoided. These perils this little treatise avoids by steering clear away from the danger zone altogether. The pages that follow consist chiefly of the impressions and reflections of one who, while doing his work, went about with his eyes open and pondered what he saw, the result being noted down in circumstances conducive not even to caligraphy, let alone the niceties of form and style, their only claim for consideration being that they were written by one who, during the past eighteen months, in all manner of situations, has been posted on every part of the line from Ypres to the Somme, and has had an experience of nearly every kind of unit of which the British armies in the field are composed. Will the gentle reader therefore forthwith renounce all great expectations and, holding his critical faculties in abeyance, accept that which follows merely for what it professes to be—a little bit of the war through a Padre's spectacles?

II

Crossing Over

“ They passed, but cannot pass away,
For England feels them in her blood like wine.
She was their mother, and she is their daughter
This Lady of the water,
And from their loins she draws the greatness which
they were.”—FRANCIS THOMPSON.

ALTHOUGH one may have gone back and forward often during one's sojourn in France, the unique memory of all is the first crossing over. A man may have done the journey several times on duty or on leave—although this latter does not seem to come round half often enough. It may even have been his misfortune to be shipped across in one of those gorgeous floating palaces that sail under the Red Cross flag. But when memories of these latter trips have become blurred and indistinct, his mind is still capable of recalling all the sights and sensations associated with the occasion when he first “ went to the Front.” There is about it, what a Frenchman calls, “ that catching at the heart which is a sign of true emotion, and the recollection of which is never effaced.”

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The reason for this is easily given. One's first crossing over makes such a deep dint upon the memory because the experience is so altogether novel. What has anyone who has hitherto followed a peaceful avocation ever had to do with "movement orders" or "transport" or "forwarding officers" or "base headquarters," not to mention the mysterious hieroglyphics by which these and other entities are denoted? When did any civilian ever travel about at the country's charges, or amid such crowds of uniformed travelling companions? No wonder that one's first experience of this proves so memorable.

And it is not merely that the impressions of such a time are so entirely unusual, they are of the kind calculated to touch one's emotions if not even to thrill and inspire them. Sir J. M. Barrie tells how when first he passed, a mere youth from school, through the impressive portals of Edinburgh University, he entered "breathing heavily as if the shades of Scott and Carlyle were in the air." In the same manner, but on a much loftier plane, the member of His Majesty's Forces who goes abroad on active service feels himself brought into contact with what is most glorious and impressive in his country's history—which is saying much. And when it is remembered that the person on whom such emotions and impressions are allowed to work has lived through months of preparation,

Crossing Over

during all of which this day was the one goal of his visions and dreams, until he is now in that mental state in which impressions produce their maximum effect, one understands how, when the other memories of the campaign have waned and faded, one's first crossing over wears all the lustre of a "red-letter day."

In most cases experiences differ but little. To the dweller far beyond the metropolitan area there is the long railway journey from the provinces, with its first hour spent in self-absorption, or in recalling farewell words and scenes, before any interest in one's fellow-travellers can be stirred. Next, the busy day in London with the completing of arrangements; purchasing the few articles still necessary for the kit; hurrying to the War Office to have this or that obscure paragraph in one's letter of appointment made plain—the War Office, the great nerve centre of military activity and yet with silent, almost deserted corridors, that speak rather of tranquillity than turmoil. Then with the approach of afternoon there is the ride across to the departure station. What scenes have not these great London termini witnessed during the months of war, the greeting of welcome, the tense hush of departure, the fervour of affectionate sympathy as sick and wounded have been borne along! Even to the dullest perception such a disengaging of emotions has transformed the

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prosaic platform into the cathedral aisle. And, if the time was early summer, did "England's green and pleasant land" ever appear so attractive or did her voice ever speak in tones so seductive as to the passing soldier, hurrying on to leave her shores?

And now he has reached the port of departure with its guarded dock gates, mountains of supplies, radiating railways, rows of sheds, battalions of waiting troops, officers and officials, and grim transports awaiting their freight of soldiery. How severe they look! Beneath these war trappings one can hardly recognise the elegant excursion boat of pre-war days. The men are very quiet as they file on board. The hush reminds one of the strained atmosphere of a Scottish Communion with the elders passing along the aisles. Not a cheer, not a song, not a word even, is spoken, as the procession files interminably along the quays and passes on board, no sound save the steady tramp of marching men. "No sound," have I written? One remark was heard, "Man, after the mud of Salisbury Plain it's fine to get one's foot upon a solid plank."

How every foot of space is utilised! It is impossible to move about for equipment and for men standing, sitting and recumbent. Every deck is alike crowded. And now, the cables slipped, we are in mid-stream. Rations are handed round.

Crossing Over

"Remember," enjoins the cheery voice of the N.C.O. to his men, "don't eat this all at once, for there's nothing more till dinner to-morrow." And when faces assume a somewhat glum expression at the iron qualities of the biscuits, the sole fare, the same ringing note breaks out, "Now then, who says more of the 'Maderia Cake'?" The humour of the British Army is one of its chief assets.

Across the shimmering waters from the shore in shadow against the setting sun, are borne the strains of music and the faint sounds of friendly voices greeting the outgoing troopship, and wishing the men God-speed. Night falls, the darkness unbroken, save for the lights that appear and vanish, to mark the tortuous course, and the flashing of searchlights that sweep the entire seaward approach. After a time, in the open, one becomes aware of two destroyers that have silently closed in on either side to act as convoys. Now it is a question of stretching oneself out on deck and risking a chill, or of facing the horrors of the "Black Hole of Calcutta" below. Whatever wins, the hours of sleep are few. Hardly has one made oneself tolerably comfortable on the hard boards than the waking of the ship into life and movement announces that the port of disembarkation has been reached.

Such are the few simple facts that have reproduced and repeated themselves in the cases of

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hundreds of thousands who have gone abroad. Make the necessary changes according as the season is summer or winter, as the time is day or night, as the voyager is officer or man, as the ship is transport or channel packet. Instead of sweltering in the hot sun, see them with full wrappings on, sheltering in shed, or behind boat or deckhouse. Let it be broad daylight with the fine sweep of the Channel in view, instead of night, and confinement in unlit holds and alleyways. Change the crowded troopship for the ordinary passenger steamer with its suggestiveness of the days of peace. Make any other variation which time and circumstance may demand and you have the environment of one's first crossing over, the memory-pictures of which will never fade.

What are one's predominant feelings at such a memorable time? Perhaps the words *pride* and *responsibility* best sum up the situation. The soldier proceeding on service is sustained by the thought of his country's greatness, while the names of her illustrious sons and their renowned achievements thrill him with pride. The cause she represents in this conflict is his boast, and he is devoutly glad that his country sought no ignoble escape, when honour pointed the way. His heart swells up in quiet gratitude that he has been permitted to "do his bit." His conscience will escape a taunt such as Henry IV. flung at

Crossing Over

the absent Crillon, "Go, hang yourself, brave Crillon. We fought at Argues. *And you were not there.*" And he is also confident that victory can be the only issue. But his going involves a grave responsibility, and he covenants with himself that he will do his utmost to justify his inclusion in the forces of the King. The highest motives have actuated him in taking this step, for while "conscience" has kept many from doing their part, it is the bidding of this same imperious mistress that is driving him abroad, if not the Lord of conscience Himself. The words of the hymn are not an untrue interpretation of the mental processes that have preceded many an enlistment.

" The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain ;
His blood-red banner streams afar,
Who follows in His train ? "

Where are now the crowds of fighting men that formed that transport's complement ? Some are still fighting on. Others, wounded, or sick, are recovering in the homeland. Many, alas ! have won through to the other side. But though the rude cross and the few feet of foreign soil are all they have on earth, their souls go marching on. Death is not the end, but a new beginning, and they have passed to that royal place where chivalrous souls have ever free right of entry.

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And they who knew and loved them are not discouraged. "We do not think too much of that side of it," writes a young soldier, "it is just like school, where old faces are always disappearing and new ones are arriving, while the work of the class keeps always going on."

III

The Overseas Base

"Half of the world is sending its men into the field against us, and the other half is casting guns for them."

GERMAN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE.

AMONG the soldier's impressions not the least striking are those of the Overseas Base. Perhaps his night on the crowded transport leaves him in that condition when sights, sounds and environment generally produce their maximum effect. The reason is probably to be found in the nature of that environment itself: but whatever it may be, one recalls the first few days at the Base as a time when one is constantly opening the eyes in wonderment on the strange things of a different world.

First of all, one marvelled at the perfection of the arrangements made by the transport and forwarding departments for the officer's reception. Merely one among many others, he arrives and reports at Base Headquarters, to find that he is expected, that his coming was duly notified, and that his post is awaiting him. A transport waggon has been sent to the dock for his baggage, it will proceed to his billet, and perhaps may

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arrive before him. The machinery of transport has been carefully devised and constructed and is apparently capable of all the necessary expansion; all of which inspires the newcomer with great confidence. Nor amid so much dry detail is his reception merely curt and businesslike. There is a touch of cordiality, a willingness to assist and oblige, which softens the harsh note of officialism, and provides a very pleasant memory for all the days, many of them drab and comfortless, that are to follow.

As a rule, there is a brief period of waiting for further orders. During this time the soldier gathers himself together, and incidentally has the pleasant experience, to many the first, of roaming at leisure in a continental city. By most this is recalled as one of the happy memories of serving abroad. Strolling along the streets and by the wharves, resting in the gardens and leafy enclosures in which most continental cities abound, and contemplating the crowds, representing all types, which pass hither and thither, he becomes acclimatised, he accustoms himself to his new surroundings, and readjusts himself to the new conditions which are to be his *habitat* for many months to come.

The Base at which he has arrived may be a cathedral city in the north, and if so he will soon wend his way to the old town situated on the higher ground, above the dockyard grime

The Overseas Base

and the smoke and noise of commerce—the city's sacred heart. He will admire the mediæval touch in the old church and ramparts, the soft green-sward and the avenue of shady limes, and mark how the whole crowns with distinction and charm a town which otherwise would merely be a huddled mass of houses in narrow, mean, ill-smelling streets.

Or the new arrival may have disembarked at a large seaport, situated where one of France's greatest rivers finds its outlet to the ocean, where, should the season be summer, he will be welcomed by all the ocean's attractiveness. Down the coast of France the swell of the Atlantic, rising and falling in tidal volume, covers and lays bare, with every round of the clock, great stretches of grey shingle, not the forbidding deep that boils and frets around our northern rocks, but the waters of pale shimmering green that carry the imagination to the warm south, with its vine groves and olive complexions and long summer days.

Very pleasant it is to visit the wharves on the river bank, most impressive in their solid masonry, speaking of great natural resources and of the nation's confidence in its future, and while fitly compacted for the day's work, laid out to please the eye and to afford a promenade for the busy toilers when the day's darg is over. The soldier awaiting his call northwards finds it interesting to move among these crowds, especially at

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the approach of twilight, when the sky darkens, and the lights of the patrol and tugboats moored alongside begin to shed a warm radiance on the faces of the groups clustered round the gangways or passing by. Contemplating the townspeople as they stroll about, or rest on the benches, the atmosphere of peace and contentment so much impresses him, in spite of war, that he cannot think of these good folks ever wishing to emigrate like the northerners whom inhospitable conditions too frequently impel to seek a home in other lands.

It is at the Bases that the many different camps are situated: the rest camps, concentration camps and convalescent camps, which the great enterprise has rendered necessary. Indeed, on the confines of these towns are almost innumerable constructions of wood and canvas, housing thousands of men, covering such vast areas, and with such an appearance of permanence, that one does not wonder that the French sometimes jocularly ask whether the British ever intend to go home. Pitched on properly drained ground, generally occupying high breezy situations, these camps are well laid out, and their paths with neatly trimmed grass edges in summer, and clean foot-boards in winter, testify to a trait over and over again exemplified in the course of the campaign—the British soldier's love for well-appointed surroundings.

The Overseas Base

The convalescent camps, as the name implies, are for sick and wounded soldiers, whose state is such as to demand their removal from the fighting line, but not so serious as to necessitate a journey to England. Here they generally make a speedy recovery, after which they proceed to rejoin their unit. To most of our fighting lads the concentration and rest camps will be a permanent memory as being the place where their first night in France was spent.

Nothing is more interesting than to visit the camp when battalions are moving out. The men, all in the glow of health after their period of training and proclaiming their fitness in every movement, are about to have their supreme ambition gratified by matching their fitness against the enemy. And right bravely they march away headed by their band. However, if the onlooker is tempted to soar away on the wings of sentiment, he will perhaps be brought rudely back to earth by one soldier remarking to his neighbour in tones of great disgust, as his new hobnailed boots come into contact with the pavé, "Ach, I canna walk on thae —— roads," an adjective of the requisite qualifying flavour being duly applied.

But such a transition from the sublime is only momentary. It is a great occasion. One emotion after another sends a tremor into the depths of one's being. And when company after company has departed, when the extended column has wended

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its way along the dusty road until the last file disappears behind the hill, when the music becoming fainter at last dies away, and when one surveys the empty parade ground and then turns away alone, one forgets for a moment the splendid fellows who have taken their departure, and turns wistfully to the future, to the distant victory that is certain, but also to the stern pathway of conflict and sacrifice before that victory is won.

The Base is also remembered as the place where one arrives at a truer appreciation of the awful cost of war. One cannot visit the Bases, particularly those nearest England, without experiencing a constant tugging at the heart-strings. The temper is ever being touched to sadness, and from the depth of this divine sadness, not "*divine despair*,"

"Tears, idle tears . . .

Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes."

The writer had to go no further than the Base in order to understand the kindly admonition of the medical officer who examined him for service, "Your heart is sound, but I hope it is not too soft." For the marks of war's cruel ravages are everywhere. Red Cross Ambulances abound in the streets and are drawn up in long lines near the wharves and railways for use as required. Red Cross trains—splendidly appointed—within and without, occupy the greater part of the stations.

The Overseas Base

Red Cross steamers, formerly the pick of the Channel flyers, now transformed into sumptuous floating hospitals, with their light-coloured funnels and white and green-lined hulls, are moored alongside the harbours. Red Cross Nurses in their uniforms of grey with red facings strike a dominant note in the streets, while most of the suitable buildings have become Red Cross hospitals.

Hence a visit to a Base is apt to be somewhat trying to one of tender susceptibilities. To the soldier passing through it is a stern, perhaps the first, reminder of the horrors of war. Near by is the place, ever to be held sacred by future generations, where lies the honoured dust of many of our heroes, brave sons of the empire, "who loved not their lives unto the death," men of every county from Cornwall to Caithness, from Ireland to the Hebrides, and from all the British dominions beyond the seas. There are very many of them, these mounds and crosses, and their number is ever multiplying. This is the place where words fail to express one's emotions. With bowed head in silence one withdraws from the heroes' resting-place, grateful for the verse engraved upon the tombstone near the gateway, which somehow accords with one's mood of sadness.

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And the flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to fade, but all—
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O death."

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But without doubt that at the Base which strikes the imagination most is the constant obtrusion of the material side of warfare. The Base is the great receiving and distributing centre of all manner of supplies for the armies in the field. Here they are unshipped, accumulated and despatched. And when it is borne in mind that the lists of necessary articles for armies on active service extend to two goodly-sized volumes, and that supplies, in spite of an enormous demand, must be stocked in quantities that render shortage impossible, one understands the reason for these piled-up masses. One realises why so many as two score of vessels may be seen in the roadstead waiting their turn in the routine of berthing and unloading, and how it is that these stations are now gigantic railway centres.

At the same time even here the human element is anything but absent. Round the base are many different units, bakeries that have to turn out sufficient bread each day to meet the requirements of a population as large as that of a great city; motor workshops, where repairs to transport are executed; remount and veterinary camps where the faithful horse is treated according to the highest principles of medical and surgical science, and many other units. The attendants and employees are everywhere evident, as well as representatives of every trade and profession, not to mention many prisoners

The Overseas Base

who are, wherever possible, profitably set to work.

In addition trains of *personnel* are continually being loaded and are passing out. Gun teams, spick and span with respect to both horses and men, clatter down the causeways between the sidings. Here is a Y.M.C.A. hut, that institution which is unique in the manner in which it has interpreted its duty, and done it. Within, kind ladies from home are earning lasting gratitude by dispensing fragrant cups of tea to the boys passing on their way north. Now the long trains draw out of the siding, the soldiers' *trains-de-luxe*, each car carefully lettered, *Hommes* 40, *Chevaux* 8. The wide doorway of one frames a picture of happy, rosy-faced youngsters, stuff much too good for German shells. In the doorway of another are seated two grooms, their legs dangling over the side and the horses tethered up behind. It is dreadful to see such happy young fellows and to think of the clash of battle beyond.

And yet, as one leaves, it is not on this that the mind dwells, but on these enormous quantities of supplies that stagger the imagination, and at the same time give a key to the colossal nature of the enterprise. The acreage of sheds is equivalent to the area of a town, and every shed is stored to its last cubic yard of space. Hitherto one's standard of quantity as applied to merchandise has been limited to the parcels seen in a large

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warehouse. Barbed wire is mentioned, and one's mind reverts to the half-dozen rolls seen at the dealer's in hardware. Here there are fields of it in extent, and mountains of it in height. And the same vast scale applies to everything else, guns, munitions, food supplies and the thousand and one articles of equipment.

Amid the interminable mass one's former categories fail one, one's former standards cease to exist, one is left bewildered; ordinary words are powerless to express one's thoughts. It is as if the fighting man were made to pass through this as a grim gateway, that his spirit might grasp something of the realities of the conflict with principalities and powers ahead. Through this gateway he goes inspired. For he concludes that a Britain that can work this miracle in the domain of organisation can achieve all that is needed in order to win through to victory.

IV

“Vive La France”

“ Nous entrerons dans la carrière,
Quand nos aînés n’y seront plus ;
Nous y trouverons leur poussière,
Et la trace de leurs vertus !
Bien moins jaloux de leur survivre
Que de partager leur cercueil,
Nous aurons le sublime orgueil,
De les venger ou de les suivre.

Aux armes, mes citoyens, formez vos bataillons !

Marchons, Marchons,

Qu’un sang impur abreuve nos sillons !

THE social life of France to-day is largely black-edged. That is perhaps the first fact that strikes one on going to France during these days of war. The note of mourning is everywhere. Black clothes are very generally worn. Most of the usual expressions of gaiety have been suspended. The café-life which means so much to the French is greatly curtailed. Pianos and gramophones are seldom heard. Theatres, music-halls and picture shows, if not entirely closed, are open only at intervals and that nowhere save in the large towns.

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Coming into contact with the people one finds that certain words, tragic words, are frequently on their lips—*tuê*, *disparu*, *prisonnier*. One or other of these sums up the fate of a friend and explains the gloom that has descended like a pall over so many homes. And when one goes up close to the fighting line the cemeteries with the long rows of simple wooden crosses tell their own moving story. "There must be more than five hundred crosses here," said the writer to a French soldier working among the resting places of the fallen heroes, in an improvised cemetery on a pleasant stretch of lawn under the shadow of the trees on the road to Neuville St. Vaast. "Five hundred," was his reply, as his gaze swept over the clustered mounds, "there are nearly two thousand!" And when one remembers that from Ypres in the north, right on through Artois, Picardy, Champagne and the Vosges to the Swiss frontier, these hallowed places follow the windings of the line of battle, one understands why, beneath the proud and confident spirit of the French people of to-day, there is likewise a touch of sadness.

One cannot fail to notice also how the whole nation is subordinating everything to the unrelenting prosecution and the ultimate winning of the war. Except for the aged and invalids, one hardly meets any men who are not in uniform, or who do not bear a mark indicating that they are in

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war employment. Every young and middle-aged male person who is fit has been assigned the post in which his country considers he can best make his contribution to the common cause. There are no potential soldiers handing round soup in the hotels. In all cases women waiters have replaced able-bodied men. In the case of many sterner callings, such as husbandry for example, the same transformation has taken place. In barn and stable, at the plough and by the threshing machine, the work is being done by women.

Nor do they spare themselves. On the farm lands around the villages of the Somme district the writer has seen them at plough, toiling on into the late December afternoons, and only unyoking their teams when darkness made a stop imperative. But in truth the same zeal has taken hold of the entire nation. “Give us no holidays,” war workers have cried, “we are working for our country.” And again, “Keep the extra pay you offer us and put it in the war chest.” On New Year’s Day, 1916, the writer met a mechanic, an employee in one of the Government’s large motor repair shops. But for an occasional Sunday this man had not had a single respite from work during the whole of the previous year. And, what is more striking, at such a time in his country’s history he did not consider that he had any right to let the question of holidays enter his thoughts.

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The same will to fight and to conquer pervades the entire army. Soldiers who are at last home on leave will tell you that it is their first "*permission*" since the beginning of the war. "France," declared the mayor of a country village on the line to the writer, who had been negotiating with him for a piece of land on which to lay out a soldiers' cemetery, "France did not will this war. Even when hostilities had commenced France was not over-enthusiastic about it. But now France is in it heart and soul, wishes it to be fought out to the end, and anticipates that end with confidence."

But what a price France has had to pay! There is the toll of her manhood already referred to, the thousands of the flower of her youth who marched off in high spirits to the mobilisation of August, 1914, and who will never return. But in a material sense as well the visitations of war have been equally severe. The many closed establishments in the first town one enters are a plain announcement of the grave extent to which peaceful industry has been affected, while every day one spends at the front affords additional evidence of the way in which life generally is hampered and restricted by the many regulations rendered necessary by a state of war.

Railways, for example, must necessarily be at the call of the military authorities; consequently a chance two trains a day on the branch lines, if

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even that, represent the provision set apart for civilian use. Within the zones occupied by the armies all accommodation for men and horses has to be surrendered whenever requisitioned. The inhabitants must conform to certain orders regarding the hours when they must be indoors for the night, while the movement of the people from village to village must be similarly regulated. Nor must it be forgotten that for two years an appreciable part of the entire territory of France has been in the enemy's hands. This involves a material loss which is incalculable, besides the pain entailed by the dividing up of families with no possibility of intercommunication, and the constant outraging of the feelings of the loyal French within the occupied territory. And yet all these restrictions and hardships the people gladly accept, if by their so doing the war can be rigorously prosecuted and ultimate victory secured.

But it is the people who have had the ill luck to live on or near what is now the fighting line who have suffered most grievously. Substantial cities like Rheims and Arras, with their historic buildings, are hopelessly mutilated, while towns and villages, farm buildings and cottages, are unrecognisable heaps of ruins. What were happy homes until two years ago, have, during the interval, been used as billets and sometimes even as stables. Only a short time ago the writer assisted in getting a dead

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horse removed from its loose-box, which was formerly the living room of a country cottage. And in many cases the rich man's chateau has fared even worse.

The untold misery this entails on the country people can hardly be conceived, still less described. "We had a farm near ——" said a woman to the writer, "and we were very prosperous, my husband and I. But the Germans came. They seized the stock, the buildings were destroyed, the fields are now lying waste, my husband is a prisoner, and we are penniless." Another brave woman who had called in the services of our Veterinary Officer, told the writer how she had tried to work what was left of their farm single-handed, how one of the children, not getting all the necessary attention, had turned ill and died, how sickness had now come among the cattle, how her husband was at Verdun, and she had not heard from him for several weeks. All over France pathetic instances like these are to be found, and seem to illumine with a hallowed radiance the pathway of sacrifice that our noble ally is treading at this hour.

"The royal road of the Kingdom," says Thomas-à-Kempis, "is the holy way of the Cross." And no one will deny that through her sufferings and endeavours France has been purified and exalted. There was a time when one was apt to compare France and Germany to the former's

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disadvantage. The fact is that almost all the world had fallen down and worshipped material standards, and had wilfully and culpably shut its eyes to the truth that there is more to live for than trade expansion, self-aggrandisement and a place in the sun, that there are ideals worthy to be had in reverence such as freedom and equality, the humanities, peaceful industry and joyous contentment.

And even if it must be conceded that France before the war was living beneath her true level, all that is now greatly changed. The nation has been baptised as with a new spirit. The observances of religion have been revived. The petty and sordid has gone out from her political life. Among her people, from the highest to the lowest, there is an intelligent grasp of the issues at stake, and a right appreciation of the glory of the Allies' cause. Her sublime achievements during the two years of fighting have evoked the admiration of the world, while the inspiring spectacle she exhibits of unwearying patience, sustained endeavour and unshakable confidence, have equally supported her friends and discouraged and baffled her foes. The artist rightly read the heart of France when he depicted the maimed soldier with his little daughter. The child had sprung to her father's knee, but sobbed piteously when she saw how cruelly the fortunes of war had used him. “Weep not, my little one,”

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he said consolingly, as he stroked her tresses, "I have lost an arm. What of that? Life will be fairer for you and all the children of France." Not without reason are many conceding to-day to our glorious ally the title, "The Greatest Nation in Europe."

V

The Front

" La terre est brulée, calcinée, cuite et recuite, labourée par l'acier, ensemencée de plomb. Il semble qu'une vague de feu a passé par là. Ce que le fer n'a pas brisé, l'explosion l'a tué, la flamme de l'obus l'a grillé. Chaos indescriptible ! Mais ce qui fait le supreme horreur de cette vision d'épouvante, c'est que dans cet enfer vivent des hommes."

Le Champ de Bataille de Notre-Dame-de-Lorette.

THE Front is country like any other tract with which you are familiar. There are woods and rivers, fields and highways, heights and hollows, farms and villages, and sometimes even towns and cities. Nor have all the ravages of war affected the general configuration. There are districts where the fighting has lasted weeks on end, where hundreds of thousands have fallen wounded or dead. And yet when the traces of the carnage are removed, but for a ruined house, the shattered trees, and the shell-torn fields, the general appearance of the landscape remains the same.

The western line extends for hundreds of miles, and it passes through ever changing scenes, towns

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and villages, forest land and open country, districts which in previous days were busy manufacturing centres, and others where the normal pursuit was agriculture. But now that the activities of war have descended on these parts there is one description, perhaps only one, that applies to them all in common. The Front is the district which witnesses on the grandest possible scale the reversal of all ordinary terrestrial conditions. This is as one would expect. Peace is the ordinary, war the abnormal. And in the district where the war is actually going on, it is not to be wondered at that the ordinary is suspended, and that the abnormal prevails.

Here, for example, you depart from life's ordinary habits and usages and follow the opposite. In circumstances where otherwise you would ride on horseback or in a carriage, here you walk. Where otherwise you would walk upright, here you stoop or even crawl. You avoid the light of day and carry through your most important affairs by night. A well-made highway is to be avoided, a stern law decreeing that you should follow a trench. Houses, otherwise so comfortable and inviting, here hold out no attractions. They are abandoned to rats and other vermin, while you take to cellars and dug-outs. Truly the Front is the land of *topsy-turvy*, where things go by opposites. It is the grand illustration of the upheavals of war.

The Front

Some things however, do remain constant. The configuration of old mother earth changes not. Nor does the established routine of nature suffer either deflection or decay. Over all these upheavals, these awful scenes of blood and fire, the sun rises and sets, the lark sings, the flowers bloom and wither. The clouds gather and break into rain, there are the frosts and snows of winter, while sometimes above the noise of man-made cannon there sounds out the reverberation of heaven's artillery. Truly nature proceeds unheeding. The cataclysms of war have not entered her domain. Constant also remain man's finest qualities. All unaffected here is the rich bloom of courage, emotion, faith, self-sacrifice.

The road to the Front is like the road that leads nowhere else. To almost any sector the features are the same. You take a train to what is called "Railhead," whence a motor-car or waggon conveys you to, say, "a dump," the place where supplies are sorted out and handed over to the various units. This is generally the limit of the motor-waggons' sphere of action, and as a rule is well beyond the reach of the enemy's shells. As you continue your journey on horseback, in a limber or on foot, the fact of war begins to obtrude on you from every side. The civilian population becomes scantier, and the military proportionately more and more in evidence. Away to the right you descry a building marked by two flags side

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by side pendent, the Red Cross and the Union Jack, token that this is a Casualty Clearing Station or Field Ambulance. A little further on to the left in front of the stretch of wood, you descry horse-lines, hundreds of horses there drawn up, stamping their feet and keeping their tails in perpetual movement to drive off the flies should it be summer, or if winter, standing drearily knee-deep in an ocean of mud.

Now you must clear off to the roadside to pass a long convoy of motor munition waggons, either themselves en route or waiting the more convenient season of nightfall for their advance. Next you must step aside to avoid the rush of these motor ambulances hurrying down from the dressing station with their freight of wounded. At the rear of the waggon you catch a glimpse of two muddy boots protruding from under the blanket, and you breathe a prayer for the stricken soldier. Here at the roadside, under the shelter of some friendly trees, awaiting further orders, are a couple of ponderous guns, mighty engines of destruction, with their "caterpillar" tractors in attendance. Now and then along the way you have been hearing the distant reports of their co-fraternity already in action. You look skyward for the aeroplane whose engines you hear humming, and you take note of the large captive balloon, "sausage" it is called, that keeps steady watch on the enemy's movements.

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Your thoughts are summoned earthward by an armed sentry who asks where you are going and if you have a pass. You come to trenches with formidable obstructions of barbed wire in front, stretching out across the undulating country on either hand as far as the horizon. This is the second line. Now the villages are almost wholly given over to the billeting of troops, and a demolished roof or a gaping hole in the walls tells you that you have reached the danger zone. A little further on a notice board announces that waggons, horses, and companies of men must not pass further than this by day, and the enemy's observation balloon in the distance supplies the reason for this precaution.

You have not much further to proceed until you are finally driven off the road yourself, a notice confronting you which admits of no argument, "All ranks must use the communication trench." This is the beginning of the last stage of your journey towards the nearest point of contact with the enemy. You obey the order and descend. It is a simple trench, wide enough for two men to pass, and deep enough to screen the tallest. Zig-zagging across country or keeping within moderate distance of the road, it winds its way towards the line. Gangways under foot, supports where the earth shows signs of crumbling, and telephone wires on one side complete the furnishing.

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You follow your way with comparative ease unless the boards should be wet and muddy. Now you are passing, it may be, the locality of our batteries, next the place where supplies are "dumped" nightly, and then the region of Brigade-Headquarters. You start at the very loud report of our guns, and the sound of the shells speeding overhead prepares you for the "swish" of the enemy projectiles that come back in response. Where the trench winds round to the left you catch a glimpse of the outside world above, a land of desolation and waste, shell-holes and barbed wire. Now you approach the populated district. Dug-outs descend to left and right, other trenches open out on either side. Soldiers pass in different directions, carrying supplies, such as water, rations, clothing and ammunition, the men all more or less in the colour of their surroundings. *You are at the Front.* A few yards more and you are standing among the men who, amid mines and mortars, shells and decomposing bodies have formed the wall of flesh between us and the horrors of Belgium.

And now, returning by the same communication trench and crossing the open country to yonder wooded hill behind the lines, look back from its sheltering slopes upon the scene as it unfolds itself at your feet. Away to the right, outlined against the sky, are the housetops of a town battered almost out of recognition. To the left

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in the distance you catch a glimpse of the tottering towers of a cathedral. Between these are square miles of desolation, scored with trenches—you can follow them as they stretch away in white and brown right up to the enemy's positions—a land disfigured with gunpits, dotted with shell holes, bristling with barbed wire, blasted and devastated as by some hellish monster's all-devouring breath.

What a panorama! And yet is not the prevailing impression one of tranquillity, a silence as of death? Times there are by day when the heavens reverberate and the earth trembles, and by night when gun-flash and trench-flare light up the landscape. But in the main the atmosphere of this desolate tract is one of peace. And yet, beneath the surface-calm, weapons bristle as never before in the history of war. These earth-made shelters conceal a population as great as half a dozen of the capitals of Europe. And in trench and dug-out there is being fought out from day to day to a decision, another phase of the great conflict of the ages, between the two antithetic and irreconcilable forces, barbarism and humanity, lawlessness and reason, the Kingdom—yes, let us say it—the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God.

VI

“ Passed by the Censor ”

“ ‘ You’ve seen regiments when they first arrive at the front decorated like little Christmas trees, with all kind of contraptions presented to them by their maiden aunts,’ a Padre once said to me. ‘ You’ve seen them after they have had a spell in the trenches. They carry nothing then but what they’ve got to. Well, we parsons with the army are like that, we have had to drop our Christmas tree decorations, and to carry nothing but the common essentials of our faith.’ —F. A. MCKENZIE.

I. FROM A CAMP IN FLANDERS

SINCE last I wrote, I have been moved about a good deal, and I fear that not a few communications to me may possibly have gone astray; at least so I judge from the belated arrival of others and from the number of redirection marks which they carry. At present, while I cannot state definitely the locality where I am situated, I believe I do not give away anything “ of value to the enemy ” when I say that I am in Belgium. And as everyone knows, to be anywhere in Belgium—that is other than as a prisoner of war in German hands—is to be very near the “ Front ” ; and

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that, too, not in the loose sense of the term as covering any locality if only it is in France, even though it be as far south as Rouen, but “ the Front ” in the literal and honest meaning of the word. Here we are never suffered to forget that a state of war exists. We hear the thunder of the guns all day long. The bombardment of aeroplanes by anti-aircraft guns, both British and enemy, is of regular occurrence. We are encamped in a field about half a mile from a village, into which as a token of “ hatred ” the enemy hurls each evening anything from ten to twenty shells, while last night a Taube, under cover of darkness, got over our camp and dropped something which descended with a nasty “ swish,” but fortunately lay quiet when it fell. From all which it may be concluded that life at the Front is never unduly monotonous.

I am being continually asked for my impressions of the war, to which I almost as invariably reply that the good people at home with the full run of our illuminating newspapers know much more regarding the general situation than those actually on the field of battle. The reason for this is, that we are so much engrossed with our own particular and local duties that we miss seeing the situation as a whole. However, there are impressions which no one out here can possibly miss, and many of them are predominatingly sad. When I was stationed a little further down country, among the saddest sights I witnessed were the droves

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(one can hardly use any other word) of refugees being shepherded down to a place of safety from some village or other near the firing line that had become untenable. The spectacle contained all the elements of pathos and tragedy. It was as if the word had suddenly gone round that something awful was about to happen, and that it was necessary to flee at once. And so dropping the tasks at which they were working, and picking up any little article from among their household goods, and in the clothes that they chanced to be wearing at the time, they had set out, women and children, aged and invalids, whither they knew not, anywhere away from their threatened homes. As one stood aside and regarded these motley throngs, the last remnants of some French or Belgian village that the war had not already claimed, the awful aspect of dejection and exhaustion in their faces, the little children clutching by their mothers' skirts and being trailed along, the sick hardly able to advance another step, some with loaves of bread under their arms, old men with their whole worldly goods tied in a napkin, boys with their household pets—a bird in a cage or a little dog—which at the last they could not bear to leave behind. As one viewed all this and reflected, one could not but feel that when the day of retribution comes an awful punishment awaits those who willed that such a state of things should be.

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And many other sad sights come under one's notice. Who that has seen it can ever forget the constant stream of wounded and exhausted humanity from the front down to the bases. Who that has stood at the open grave, beneath the folds of the Empire's flag, and laid the fallen heroes to rest, can ever forget the little cemeteries with their rows of crosses where sleep our boys who have given all for God and Fatherland? Here is material for memories which will fade only with the fading of life itself. However, the impressions are not all those of sadness. There is the confidence, sublime and magnificent, of our men, their unbroken cheerfulness, their stoical and patient endurance of hardship. There is the inspiring example of France, the whole manhood of which is lined up against the common foe. There is the sense of security begotten of the knowledge of slowly accumulating quantities of men and material until our position on the western front has approached one of impregnability. And there is the unshakable conviction that come what may our enemy cannot ultimately triumph. Amid sadness and discouragement these are the thoughts that come to fire our hearts afresh.

While I have spoken of things saddening and gladdening, I cannot but reflect that there is a large extent to which the life of the country up here follows its natural course. The people cling

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as long as they can to their homes. The harvest has been safely gathered in. Above the noise of the guns the birds are singing ; and from the tent where I sit writing I can hear the happy sound of playing children, the boys and girls romping in the fields within a mile or two of the firing line. But all the same the war is the engrossment from which there is no escape, and there can be no relief until the haunting horror of it has passed. The day of victory no one can predict. It would appear that there is still a tremendous journey ahead. We are now spending £3,000,000 a day. I do not wonder that we are spending so much, the marvel is that so much is being done for that amount. But we have still to give more. Many have flocked to the colours, and yet many more will be required. But however great the sacrifices there is no other attitude towards the war, from which for us there was no honourable escape, than to pursue it to the end.

Since writing the above I have strolled through the camp. The evening has now begun to fall, an autumn evening somewhat chilly. A company of the boys, a score or so, who have been resting here have just formed up, and marched away back to duty, singing. Inside a tent, lit by one flickering lamp, the men reclining on their stretchers are joining in with a gramophone in " The Little Grey Home in the West," while close up by the light one of the soldiers is industriously

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sewing. Round the camp fires groups are quietly talking, their features now and again lit up as the sinking embers burst into flame. Away in the north-west there is still a red glow in the sky, and as one turns one's gaze in that direction and reflects, one cannot but remember that beyond that distant horizon lies the fair land of heart's desire, whither the fighting lads will gladly return, but not, please God, until the task has been accomplished.

Belgium,

27th August, 1915.

II. BELGIUM'S CALVARY

For the past seven weeks I have been stationed in Belgium, the little strip of territory west of the Nieuport-Lille line, all that now remains to this sorrow-stricken country, and, from every-day observation I can form an idea, even if somewhat inadequate, of this brave people's tribulation. "My country is on fire," wrote a Belgian boy, who in the depths of his despair threw himself the other day into the Clyde, from which he was rescued, and his words form no exaggerated description. Belgium has undergone a Calvary which has fallen to the lot of no other land.

And how nobly the people who are clinging to the little parcel of land they can still call their

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own are enduring this martyrdom ! The full story of those who are living under the iron heel of the enemy's oppression has not yet been told, possibly never will be told. Doubtless the fires of Belgian patriotism are burning as brightly and fiercely as ever in Brussels, Liège and Antwerp, and the smaller towns and country districts held for the present by the merciless invader. But here the passionate devotion of the Belgian to his country's interests and his readiness to sacrifice all for its good is manifest to every observer. From the French frontier right up almost to the firing line, during these months of spring, summer and autumn, every acre of territory has been placed in servitude for the furnishing of food supplies ; and, from dawn to dusk the patient forms of women, boys and aged men may be seen bending industriously at their tasks. In many instances the entire household is transported in the early morning to the fields, where the whole day is spent. Seated at their doors the very aged and even invalids may be seen stripping the hop plants which have been brought to them from the fields. Any who can be spared from the work of husbandry are busy repairing the badly used-up roads, in view of the winter campaign, in order that no factor may be omitted which might contribute towards victory. Nor is the manufacture of munitions overlooked. Three Belgian boys were brought into our station the other day

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sadly bruised and battered. Two died shortly after admission. The third is now recovering. They were little more than fourteen or fifteen years of age, but they had come from a shell factory close by, where they were doing their share to provide munitions for (it might be) their fathers in the firing line, and where, alas, they had been the victims of an accidental explosion. There can be no doubt that Belgium, which gave us at the beginning of the war an example, hitherto unparalleled, of honourable loyalty to treaty agreement, even to the point of sacrifice, is now reading the world a lesson in uncomplaining endurance, confident hope, and, above all, of labour and organisation towards victory.

These are the people we are asked to help with our means. Our burdens are already heavy, and there are signs that they may be heavier still. They are being borne with an acquiescence, a cheerfulness even, which is truly wonderful. As the Chancellor of the Exchequer remarked the other day, it would appear as if the people were “asking to be taxed.” If this is true even to a moderate degree the explanation can only be that we realise there are but two ways—victory, or the light of our Empire’s life, with all our fair ideals, extinguished for ever. We do not hate the Germans, notwithstanding their attitude to us. Within a few yards from where I write, in a small tent, lie five Germans, prisoners and

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wounded—others are being brought in. I have been with them, spoken to them, asked them questions, and I must admit, even at the risk of being misunderstood, that in their presence, with them face to face, all my feelings of hatred, every vestige of a desire to do them hurt, completely disappeared. But we hate, we loathe and despise their system, that which they represent and for which they fight. To this end we are cheerfully bearing burdens and enduring sacrifices, and, amid all the burdens and sacrifices entailed, we consider that our debt to Belgium should find its rightful place. Others are sacrificing much more than those who remain at home—no matter how great such sacrifices may be.

The writing of this letter has been frequently interrupted. The fact is that into this camp, continuously during the past twenty-four hours, have walked and reeled and staggered, been carried in stretchers and borne on the backs and in the arms of strong and willing workers, the battered and wounded representatives of some of our bravest and proudest Scottish battalions. Defeated? Oh, no! But that is the price which some are paying in order that our country may be kept safe. As I beheld the spectacle, as I witnessed these sights which no human word can describe, the awful realism of the prophet's words came to me with a new, almost overpowering might. "Every battle of the warrior is with

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confused noise and *garments rolled in blood.*" I came to where amid the prostrate forms I found a young Scot evidently dying. In reply to my query as to where he came from, "Leuchars," he breathed softly and passed away. I thought in a moment of the friends in the distant home, of the old church at Leuchars, and of St. Andrews close by, doubtless so dear to this lad who had given all for you and me, and then I thought of the Psalm tune we so often sing at our evening worship with the words to which it is so closely wedded, and I prayed that such might be the dying hero's supplication.

"Lo, I do stretch my hands
To Thee, my help alone;
For Thou well understands
All my complaint and moan.

Because I trust in Thee,
O Lord cause me to hear
Thy loving kindness free,
When morning doth appear.

Belgium,

25th September, 1915.

III. THE PADRE'S TENT

We have now crossed the borderland between autumn and winter. Even in summer Flanders cannot exactly be regarded as one of earth's idyllic spots. The landscape is too flat, the soil

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too clayey, and the vegetation altogether too prosaic to stir any æsthetic enthusiasm. Now, however, in the late days of autumn, it begins to suggest the possession of an infinite capacity for creating discomfort. Outside the small bell-tent where I sit writing, cold rain-squalls are driving across the naked fields ; the roads, but for the small centre strip of pavé, are knee-deep with mud, and officers and men are going about their duty, stolidly and without any wastage of geniality, garbed in gum boots, storm caps and long weather-proof capes. The conditions in the trenches on such a day as this can be better imagined than described.

As for the chaplain, he never ceases to be grateful for the comfort of his tent. Standing by the tent pole in the centre he gazes admiringly on the various articles of furniture. To the right of the doorway stands the towel rail, of somewhat rustic construction, improvised from the branch of a tree. Close by it is the basin-stand, which consists of a piece of canvas supported at the four corners in a wooden framework tastefully and wonderfully made. Adjoining to the right is a box which formerly brought two tins of petrol to the seat of war. Now lying on the flat it makes an excellent dressing table, somewhat low no doubt, but sufficient for the purpose. The under part forms a commodious receptacle for boots, which are more serviceable to a camp

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Padre than books. Then further round, there find a resting-place on the floor a knapsack, a lantern, a water-bottle, a kit-bag and a mess canteen. At the further side of the tent from the doorway, stands the bureau. A legend on the side thereof, “ Raspberry 50 lbs.,” is somewhat derogatory to its dignity, but happily does not affect its utility. From the bureau to the doorway, practically along the whole side of the tent, is the bed, a sleeping bag superimposed upon an ambulance stretcher, the whole supported at the ends on two boxes which formerly contained “ Bacon 73 lbs.” The collection of some of these articles entailed not a few well-timed raids upon the Quartermaster’s Stores, but the end justified the means. A small piece of electro-plated metal fastened to the tent-pole makes an excellent mirror, while a piece of wood fastened crossways further up serves the purpose of clothes-pegs. Such are the chaplain’s quarters. They are bedroom, bathroom, dressing-room, library and study combined. Here he prepares his sermons and receives enquirers after the Truth. For his simple needs they are ample, because the externals of our modern life are after all largely a mass of useless *impedimenta*. Compared with the trenches this sheltered security in an ocean of encircling mud is “ Home, Sweet Home.”

Occasionally I have been asked to describe a chaplain’s work at the Front, but the duties are so

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diversified, and their nature is to such an extent the outcome of changing circumstances, that the task would not be easy. He represents the home Church. He passes to and fro among the men, discharging the duties of his office and constantly reminding them by his presence, if by nothing else, that the Church at home cares for them, is thinking of them, and is bearing them up in their hearts before a throne of grace. It is this thought, that the chaplain represents the whole Church of Scotland, the Church of our fathers, that is constantly with me in my work. It is never more impressively with me than when I lead along those Flanders roads to the last resting-place the funeral procession of the fallen hero lying on the rude carriage wrapped in the Empire's flag. I always feel that the whole Church of Scotland is paying tribute—all too inadequately it may be, but yet is by the presence of her representative paying her tribute—to the fallen warrior, and is herself conducting the mortal remains to an honoured burial.

I don't know how it is at home, but there is a distinct revival of religion among the troops in Flanders. I would not wish to be misunderstood. Our soldiers have not all become saints. But a belief in the truths of religion is more common, and not only so, but men out here are not ashamed of their faith. At home you have an intercessory service every week. Here in this camp we have

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one every night. When the Church of England chaplain takes the service, I ring the bell, a piece of rail which I strike with a mallet, and, when it is my turn to officiate as minister, he acts the part of handy-man. At these services over five hundred men have made profession of their faith.

The least heartening part of the day's round in Flanders at present is the reading of some of the home newspapers. What they reveal of personal recrimination and petty animosities in high political circles does not much inspire the troops who are out here fighting their country's battles. Give us a better battle shout than that. We are glad to hear that the men at home who have been prevented hitherto are now, many of them, claiming their share of the proud distinction of having obeyed the call. And we are not surprised that the martyrdom of Nurse Cavell should have produced such a result. Than the manner in which this woman was tried, condemned and murdered, the world has never received a more vivid illustration of the Germany which we are out to destroy. And yet excesses like these occasion no surprise to any who have studied Prussianism at close quarters. I remember as a student travelling in Germany when the train suddenly pulled up in a most alarming way. A young woman of refined appearance, occupying a corner seat, quickly lowered the window, and

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looking out reported that someone had been run over. Sitting in the opposite corner and with my face close to the glass, I could see the mangled remains of a man taken out almost from under the carriage. The young girl gazed at the dreadful sight for a time apparently unmoved. She then calmly raised the window and resumed her seat with the remark, "Oh, it's only a workman!" It's a short step from "only a workman" to "only a woman." It is this callous, brutal spirit, begotten of militarism, which Miss Cavell's martyrdom exemplifies, that we must break—or otherwise be broken and dominated by it!

Belgium,

30th October, 1915.

IV. GOING ON LEAVE

The journey from the front to Glasgow is not a very pleasant one. Railway travel in France is at present very tedious and exhausting, the rate of speed, even for long distances, being hardly more than ten miles an hour. The channel crossing, too, by the long routes that most of the troopships take, is apt to be somewhat trying, a condition that is not mitigated by the sight of the hundreds of soldier-passengers all wearing life-belts in case of unwelcome attentions on the part of the enemy. And when this journey is

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made in the darkest days of winter, and, at the shortest, takes almost three days, it will be conceded that it is not altogether an unalloyed pleasure. But, as the soldiers here say, “it is worth it every time!” There are in the life at the front a sameness from day to day, a subjection to rule and regulation, and a lack of personal freedom, not to mention an exposure to discomfort and danger, that make the prospect of a temporary escape from it all one that is very welcome. And yet most soldiers will tell you that as their period of leave draws to a close, they are eager and even glad to return to take up their part in “getting on with the job.”

Since my return I have settled down again to the routine of my work. On the occasion of my last letter I was situated “somewhere in Belgium.” For the past seven weeks I have been in France. The change of locality has, on the whole, been for the better. Flanders in the days of late autumn and early winter was rather cheerless. And however idyllic dwelling in tents may be during the long days of leafy and sunny June, a canvas habitation rather chills one’s enthusiasm in the dreary dripping days of early November. Nor are one’s spirits much uplifted by the occasional nightly shriek of an enemy shell. Down here, however, one’s surroundings are somewhat more kindly. Everywhere, and more especially towards the line, there are the signs of war, such as the

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omnipresent military units, the wrecked towns and villages, and the constant absorption in the operations of the campaign. But notwithstanding these, there is something softer in the surroundings. The landscape undulates; the red-tiled villages nestle warmly amid their clumps of trees; the blasts blow less fiercely. And whereas in the north, action hardly ever ceased, the sound of the guns is here not quite so insistent. Neither is there the same constant flow of "casualties," nor the same daily attendance at funerals, which are of greater number than one cares to mention. Here too, there are roofs to cover one's head. There may be little or no glass in the window, and the fireplaces may be devoid of grates, but a roof and walls in winter are something not to be despised.

My special charge now is two regiments of Highlanders. Brave, proud regiments they are, recruited principally from the extreme north-east of Scotland. They are goodly young men to look upon, and I believe are good at heart as in appearance. At any rate, they are among the few regiments whom I have met to whom Psalm books are almost a superfluity. To a man they know their Psalms by heart. Woe betide the enemy when he meets in the open such men as these. My first duty on returning was to take service with the 6th Seaforths. To reach the place in the line where they were situated involved first a journey in a motor waggon, and then a ride over

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a bare clayey hillside. It was a foggy morning as I rode over this two-mile stretch, and nothing was visible farther distant than a few hundred yards ; while our own and the enemy guns—especially our own—were in vigorous action. I was not too hopeful about the service, and when I arrived my fears were confirmed. The battalion had been badly shelled during the night, with the result that not a few were wounded, while all were more or less shaken. A room, in which I had had a meal just before going on leave, had a huge gap in the front wall. In the circumstances it was not thought advisable to gather the battalion together in one place, and the service was cancelled.

Out here chaplains conduct services in all sorts of places, but I wonder how many take service fairly regularly in the large room of a public-house ! It falls to my lot to have a service nearly every Sunday afternoon in such a place. And everything proceeds pretty much as usual except when the landlady comes in to draw off a glass of beer from the cask which stands in a corner at my right hand. On the first occasion when this happened I was a little bit put out by the wandering eyes of the men, and then by the strange and unwonted sounds proceeding from the corner. But now, even although the apparition of the barmaid and the sound of the bubbling liquid do set up a competing influence, I manage, by raising my voice or by a studied impressive-

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ness, to overcome the temporary distraction. Few of the services, however, have any incidents merging on the humorous. The assembling of a battalion in the courtyard of a ruined farmhouse behind the lines, preparatory to taking up duties in the trenches; evening prayers in the gathering darkness in a factory—now a hospital filled with wounded men, and the Thanksgiving in a tent of the survivors of an attack, services like these leave impressions and memories that will fade only with the fading of life itself.

We are passing the threshold of another year and the cause of righteousness has not yet been vindicated. Let us hope that before 1916 has closed, the new era of peace and goodwill shall have dawned upon a waiting world. That the New Year may have much blessing for you all is my heartfelt wish and prayer.

Picardy,

21st December, 1915.

V. "EN REPOS"

When a Division has done a reasonable amount of time on the Front Line, it enjoys the privilege of coming back for a rest. This was not always the case. Last winter, before the British forces on the Western Front had attained their present dimensions, there were no such privileges for our fighting men. Even yet there are Divisions that

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have remained all the time in the forefront without intermission. But luck has come our way. For the past few weeks we have been in peace and quiet. Still the word “ resting ” which is applied to this condition of affairs, is somewhat of a misnomer, for there is really much more activity here than further forward. Every working hour is crowded with all kinds of training and instruction likely to render the men more efficient for what lies before them.

For the Padre, too, this is a much more busy time. He sees more of his flock, has them all about him, in short, or in the adjacent villages, and when that flock numbers something like 2,100 men, it will be conceded that he need not be idle. His duties are of a mixed order. For one thing, he is meanwhile responsible for the running of the Canteen and the Recreation “ Room.” I put “ Room ” in inverted commas advisedly, because if you saw it your feelings would be mingled. It is the kind of place which at home would hardly be regarded as a decent shelter for a horse. But it is the best that the slender resources of the village can afford, and in any case we are improving it daily. In the canteen we can supply anything from a button to a banana, and we draw from £70 to £90 a day, so that it is no mean affair. The Padre has other occupations. For the sake of being with the men as much as possible, he sometimes accompanies them on their outings.

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The other day, when route marching, he had the privilege of riding past and being reviewed! On another occasion, along with the doctor and eighteen men, each man representing twenty soldiers, he had the task, in sham fight, of holding a wood against the "enemy," and, in the opinion of the umpire, a whole battalion was "annihilated" in attempting to storm the position. Football occupies the occasional spare hour at the front—we have Internationals in the team—and last Saturday, someone of reputed fairness being required to hold an even balance between the officers and the sergeants, the Padre was called upon to referee the match, which he did to the satisfaction of both sides! Sometimes, in the absence of the "Interpreter"—and every British unit has a Frenchman attached for this duty—he is called upon to go a message to the neighbouring large town, and the cart or limber will contain on his return such commodities as half-a-hundredweight of alum and a pair of barber's clippers.

But it is when the soldiers are back ten miles or so that the Sunday services come into their own again. We make a serious effort to maintain them regularly, even at the front, and that to the extent sometimes of observing Saturday as the day of worship. But here in the undisturbed quiet which we enjoy, no such adjustments are required. As a rule the chaplain has three

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services. The first two are with Seaforth battalions, and are held in the open air—the corner of a field sufficing for our needs. The Padre did his best to secure the use of the village churches for the Seaforths' comfort, but without success, the Priest replying that he had not the right to make such a concession. On these January Sundays, with the prevailing wintry conditions of wind and rain, the men could hardly be said to be luxuriating in comfort, standing on the sodden clay of the fields. But the services have gone on without intermission, the hollow square of 700 men formed, the books given out, the Psalm, the Hymn, the Prayer, Reading, Sermon, all carried through to the Benediction, and “ God save the King.” And, on more than one occasion, not the least devout of the worshippers has been the General commanding the Brigade. In the case of the 6th Seaforths, their service is generally held in a hollow on the slope of a hill, which rises above the village where they are encamped. And as one stands in their midst preaching the Gospel, and looks upon the stern faces of these Highlanders in the panoply of war, one's mind goes irresistibly back to similar sights at home, when the battle for our religious liberties was being fought.

In addition to two Seaforth Battalions, the chaplain ministers on Sunday to a Field Ambulance and a Cyclist company. For this service

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the little church of their village was secured, the Priest being absent on service, and the Mayor not being one who lays too much stress on denominational distinctions! The sight of two or three hundred khaki-clad healthy boys joining in worship in this Catholic church is one not likely to be forgotten. When their lusty voices are raised in the Old Hundredth, one can almost detect a strange stirring among the pictures and images, as if the plaster saints would jump down in amazement from their places. But we duly appreciate the privilege of being permitted to worship in this consecrated building, and we take care not to abuse it.

"Ah me," says my old landlady, "how the time changes. In '70-'71, in the room you occupy we lodged the Germans, and now we have the British." "But with a difference," I reply. "Oh, yes, with a great difference, but for your coming all would have been lost!" With this old lady I am billeted. She is the ordinary type of the Picardy country folk, industrious, thrifty, intelligent and devout. Her duties are the care of her two cows and her poultry. Her dwelling is a simple one, a small kitchen in the middle with two smaller rooms opening off it, one on either side. The kitchen has a stove, a table and a few chairs, and a brick floor on which the sabots clatter cheerily. It is here I am writing, the cat snoozing under the stove, and a hen, greatly daring,

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entering by the open door to make a tour of inspection. A very simple, but a most worthy home !

In such an atmosphere as this one lives. Hardly a day passes without something transpiring to stir the emotions. Battalions swinging past with pipe and drum, the guns going forward, ammunition columns longer than one dare describe, wounded coming back—one's mind is continually held in a state of absorbing interest. Sometimes it is a pathetic interest, as the other day, when one of our boys was accidentally killed at a class of machine gun instruction. And sometimes it is an interest of another kind, as when I found our boys introducing the Glasgow “ Tramway ” and “ Boys' Brigade ” Battalions to the trenches, and staying with them the first five days. There is a continuous round of activity as the work goes steadily forward. Let the people at home remember that. The work is going steadily forward.

Picardy,

26th January, 1916.

VI. ON THE MARCH

There are few spectacles more thrilling than that of military units on the move. I remember a Clyde shipbuilder once saying to me at a launch, that, although he was getting old and had seen

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hundreds of ships take the water, he never missed an opportunity of seeing it afresh, and that the same emotions and sensations returned without fail every time. I am sure the born soldier has the same undying pride in the movement of bodies of men, horses and guns. The prevailing uncertainty, the receiving of the orders, the two or three days of anticipation and the quiet pushing forward of preparations; and then, the morning of departure, when every unit and every man is found in his place equipped to the minutest detail, till, the hour for starting having arrived, the whole column, stretching it may be for miles and taking an hour or two to pass a given point, gets on the move—all this stirs emotions that one cannot readily forget. Such, too, were our emotions on that sunny morning as we left the little village that had been as a haven of rest to us during the month of January. Looking back from my place at the rear of the first battalion I could see the long stretch of narrow road, rising and falling, winding in and out, right back to the village among the trees with its church spire, which we had left. And all along these miles of road there were marching men—battalions, then transport, battalions, then transport—the smoke rising here and there from the travelling field kitchens showing that a hot meal would be ready for the men at the close of the march. And far away, bringing up the rear, the field ambulance with all its wonder-

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ful equipment for ministering to those in need. And then at the close of the day's march there is the arrival and the settling into billets. The village, whose normal population is perhaps a thousand or two, quietly absorbs all this moving mass and proceeds on its way as if nothing serious had taken place. Into its capacious embrace it receives a matter of ten thousand men, five hundred officers, fifteen hundred horses, with all the relative paraphernalia of limbers, waggons, supplies, without any appearance of being seriously incommoded. It is all a question of organisation. These French villages have their streets named—Scotch names generally—their houses numbered, and their capacity painted up in plain letters as never before. In all cases, too, sanitary and cleansing systems have been introduced, all of which leaves the country folk bewildered. But it is only by such attention to detail, by such system and arrangement that efficiency is maintained, the men kept in sound health, and, indeed, the work of warfare carried through and victory achieved.

And now as a Brigade we are somewhat scattered. One of my battalions remains in a village some distance behind the lines, the other is at the Front. The village is a comfortable and apparently prosperous place. Its chief feature—as indeed is the case with most of these French villages—is its church, an imposing edifice of

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stone, with twin spires, which are seen for miles around. With all these thousands of kilted Scots in the place, a circumstance unprecedented in its history, the incumbent evidently thought that it was only seemly that he should introduce some Caledonian colouring into his services. So both for the instruction of his congregation, and by way of paying compliment to us at the same time, he had two pipers present in church, who used their celestial instruments, I am told, to some advantage. I cannot recollect an instance of the pipes having been so signally honoured at home. My other battalion is a few miles away on the front line. Their encampment is at present in a wood, a bare, bleak wood, under flimsy canvas, without artificial warmth, and for the past two or three days the conditions have been almost Arctic in their severity. Happily the frost, if somewhat chilling to the body, has dried up the mud which abounds everywhere—in depth from a couple of inches to as many feet. What is before us we know not. *But the work is going steadily on.* The men of this splendid Territorial Highland Division are as magnificent as ever, everyone of them, Seaforths, Gordons, Camerons, Argyll and Sutherland, and Black Watch! It is when I look at these proud, brave fellows, goodly in body and in soul, that I feel that the word "Tommy" as a name for such fellows as these should forthwith be struck out. I have no substitute ready,

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but “ Tommy ” is no name for the Highland man of war, nor indeed for the great bulk of the men who form our new armies.

The Somme,

24th February, 1916.

VII. OUR FIGHTING MAN

I am often asked what I think of the British soldier. This question is easily answered. In the first place, the British soldier impresses everyone by the fact that he is clean. He is clean in his person, his rifle, his uniform. His entire equipment is clean, and he has pleasure in keeping it so. Sometimes when he returns from the trenches, he is so bespattered that it is impossible to tell where his clothing ends and the mud begins. But in the space of half-an-hour or so, by a vigorous application of soap and water, the mud has all disappeared, and he is once more fresh and smiling. The good French folks cannot understand our soldier's fondness for soap and water, and consider that he is far too extravagant with these valuable commodities. All the same, they frankly concede that of all the soldiers he pleases the eye most. The British soldier is also clean in his surroundings. Some of these French villages are enjoying for the first time in their history a sanitary and cleansing system. No sooner does the British soldier arrive than the mud begins to

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disappear from the streets, the filthy accumulations and neglected *débris* in barns and courtyards are cleared out, and an atmosphere of wholesomeness begins to pervade the place. If cleanliness is next to godliness, the British soldier is not far from the kingdom of God.

Another feature that impresses one in the British soldier is his unfailing good humour. He is patient and contented. He does not grumble or "grouse," as it is called. Billets may be uncomfortable, or even non-existent, rations may be scarce, all leave may be suspended, the transport waggon may have failed to turn up with the blankets, or an extra five miles may be added on to the day's march, yet the British soldier does not complain. It would be bad form, it would have a lowering effect on others, and so, if at any time he feels disposed to air a grievance he forthwith desists. It is the same even when the shadows gather, when he is sick or wounded, or in dire straits. I have had an experience of hospitals, ambulances, and clearing stations, and have seen after heavy engagements hundreds of men passing through, and never once did I hear a word of complaint escape the soldier's lips. It would be well if his example could be copied by his brother in civil life, who considers as foremost among his rights that of nursing a grudge and of giving it expression. Far from cherishing grudges he evinces an unfailing good humour. He sings

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and whistles as he marches, and even his hardships are made the subject of a joke. Go to the Front to-day if you desire an atmosphere of cheerfulness, and the sound of hearty mirth-provoking laughter.

The British soldier of to-day impresses by virtue of his intelligence. You may speak to a stretcher-bearer and enquire what he does in civil life, and be told that he is a chartered accountant. In an officers' mess you may find waiting at table a banker and a solicitor. A young man without hat, tunic, hose and shoes, wearing nothing in short but his shirt and kilt, his right arm in a sling, and doing his best to write a postcard with his left hand, will tell you that he is an honours graduate of Aberdeen, and that, when the call came, he was preparing for the Indian Civil Service examination. And yet the soldier's head is not developed at the expense of his heart. After a heavy shelling you may come across him sitting by his dead or expiring horse, and, if he thinks he is alone, you may hear him stifling his sobs and addressing the fallen creature in words of unfeigned tenderness. And his sorrow for the dumb animal is but a faint, though illuminating, suggestion of the stupefaction and grief with which he is overwhelmed when a comrade falls. In this connection I have been the witness of scenes much too sacred to be reduced to prosaic words.

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It is hardly necessary to add that the British fighting man shows all the qualities that mark the good soldier. He is brave and patriotic. Numerous decorations have been awarded, but without doubt as many deeds quite as brave, if not braver, have passed unnoticed. Bravest of all the recorded deeds is that of the young officer, who, about to throw a bomb, let it drop from his grasp back into the trench, where, bursting, it would have wrought havoc among the soldiers standing by, but for the fact that he, instantly perceiving the danger, threw himself bodily upon the missile and received its full shock in his own breast, thus sacrificing his life but thereby saving the lives of others. Perhaps the two distinguishing marks of the best soldier are a lofty ideal of duty, and the willingness to subordinate everything towards the carrying of these ideals into effect. Judged by this standard, the British soldier occupies a very high place.

But the question is frequently put whether the trenches have witnessed a revival of religion. If the army lists speak the truth there has been a revival, and that a very profound one, for a soldier's name without a religion opposite it is a thing unknown. Either the non-religious are not in the army, or, if they are in the army, they have not had the courage of their convictions and admitted that they make no profession of religion. But apart from this, one is struck by the number

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of soldiers who carry their New Testament, which is not without significance when one considers the limited capacity of their pack. They are also wonderfully reverent and attentive at service. They can give you, right away, the names of their favourite hymns—generally the great universally-known and loved marching songs of the Christian Church. Frequently they have little semi-private meetings for Bible reading, and occasionally an officer or soldier will conduct public worship. The conclusion would seem to be that while many who were thoughtless at home have continued to be thoughtless abroad, the religious have taken their religion with them, and not a few of the former have joined the category of the latter.

From every point of view the British soldiers of to-day move one's admiration. How else could it be, seeing that we have no longer a small professional army merely, but are in reality a nation in arms? They are worthy of the utmost we can do for them now. The soldiers of our infantry battalions, returning from the indescribable and inconceivable conditions of trench warfare, should be received as the heroes they indeed are. And when the war is happily over, it will be the nation's privilege to show its heartfelt gratitude by restoring to them their situations and places in civil life, by safeguarding their trade and material interests from the jealous encroach-

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ments of the foreigner ; and by taking steps to secure that neither they nor their dependents shall be cast upon the tender mercies of a fortuitous charity, or be reduced to beg their bread.

Artois,

28th March, 1916.

VII

What the Soldier Reads

"Behold now this vast city . . . the mansion house of liberty ; . . . the shop of war hath not there more anvils and hammers working, to fashion out the plates and instruments of armed justice in defence of beleaguered truth, than there be pens and heads there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching reformation : others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement."—AREOPAGITICA.

EVERYTHING pertaining to the soldier is interesting, and not least of all what he reads during his intervals of leisure. Unlike the lady who remarked when the minister announced a sermon on " Ways of Spending our Leisure Time," that some people are more interested in how to get leisure time to spend, the soldier has his occasional breathing-spaces. Nor need we grudge him them, for after a week of rest there may be crowded into a single half-hour enough and more than enough to counterbalance the previous inactivity.

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The ways of spending this leisure time are numerous. From the firing-line right down to the bases you will find here and there nearly every sort of recreation represented, reading and writing, quoits, football, tennis, concerts, cinemas, and theatricals. The pastime adopted depends on circumstances, such as the nature of the unit and the locality. For example, you do not have cinemas in the trenches, or outside sports under the eye of the German observation balloon. Reading, however, has the singular advantage that it can be enjoyed anywhere—at the bases, and “the back of the Front,” when it is quiet, and also in the fire and support trenches, where the soldier spends any length of time from a week up to the long “tour” of twenty-four days. It is then, especially, when the mode of life is so often sedentary, that reading enjoys pride of place, when indeed the satisfaction of the literary appetite is bounded only by the regiment's carrying capacity.

As to the soldier's choice in the matter of reading, needless to say first place must always be given to letters from home. The postal service is not the least conspicuous of the triumphs of British army organisation. The mails are of incredible bulk, and the way in which letters and parcels converge to the General Post Office and the Channel route, and are sent forth thence to the different armies, corps, divisions and brigades on

What the Soldier Reads

the Front, travelling by all means of communication, train, motor, limber, and pack-pony it may be, until the packets are dumped down, probably at dead of night, at the end of a communication trench, where they are borne to the respective companies, platoons and individuals, in their dug-outs within a few yards of the enemy—all this is part of a system which is one of the wonders of the war. And the delight which the message brings to the recipient the sender can never know.

After letters from home, next in the soldier's esteem come newspapers. He likes the newspapers because it is on them he depends for his knowledge of the general situation. And none is more ready than he to render tribute to the manner in which the Press generally has interpreted and carried out its duty in this hour of the Empire's need. The soldier is grateful not merely for the news and the heartening he gets from the newspapers that reach the Front, but also for the fact that so many are marked "This copy is free to troops."

As might be expected, the soldier in the trenches does not cease to be interested in the affairs of his own district. In his case absence but stimulates his interest. One of the most remarkable features in this connection is the extent to which provincial journals have developed a "continental circulation," all the country newspapers

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from Land's End to John o' Groats being well represented. The illustrated papers and journals, both daily and weekly, are great favourites with the soldiers, while magazines, irrespective of date of issue, always enjoy a great run of popularity. This is so with the men in the front line, in canteen recreation rooms, in the villages behind, and more particularly in the Casualty Clearing Stations, Hospitals, and even Red Cross trains. In these cases anything of a ponderous nature is not wanted. During an experience of four months with medical units, the writer never had any difficulty in disposing of the very considerable quantities of magazines that reached him.

But the soldier's reading is not confined merely to the lighter order. Among all ranks, but more especially among the officers and men of the new armies, there are many reading men, who succeed even in warfare in maintaining an interest in literature of the more serious order. A volume of the history of the war is generally at hand. If the unit should be taking over a part of the French line, a volume in French on the previous operations on that sector very soon makes its appearance, having probably been obtained by some officer through his bookseller in London. Periodical literature of the less trifling kind is constantly arriving. The "Spectator" and "Blackwood," to mention only a few among many, are never far away.

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Should a discussion arise over a Shakespearian quotation there is generally someone who can furnish a copy of the "collected works." Poetry is not seldom represented by the "Golden Treasury" and the "Oxford Book of Verse." There are parties in the firing line sitting at the feet of Sir Oliver Lodge. One man during his year at the Front has gone through three heavy volumes on Anthropology, another is steadily tackling "The History of Civilisation in Europe," while the trench reading of a third is "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Students have brought their text books. Many of course have a French Grammar. Law and engineering students have manuals pertaining to their own departments, while an erstwhile student of Divinity has his Hebrew copy of the Book of Psalms.

But the volume most generally carried by the men of our infantry battalions, who after all as soldiers are in a class by themselves, is the New Testament. It is in many a pack. A presentation copy never needs to wait long for an owner. And in this kind of warfare, when even the carrying of anything extra should be accounted to a man for righteousness, it is surely to the credit of the troops that so many find room for their Bible.

But that is as one would expect. And when every deduction has been made the balance is on the side of religion. "What has struck me," writes Father Augler, a Chaplain in the French

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Army, " is the ' openness of soul ' with which these brave fellows willingly listen to me speaking of a religion, which till then had not existed for them, and of a God who till then was for them the ' Unknown God.' " Many from experience can subscribe to the priest's words. When Scott was dying he asked for " The Book," and on being asked " what book," he replied, " There is only one Book when a man comes to lie here." It is so with many at the Front. Amid those experiences of warfare, when the solid earth seems to tremble and almost give way beneath one, many a soldier has realised afresh the meaning of the words, " The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture."

VIII

The Soldier and Current Topics

"Heroic nations are like their own heroes, they do not make finicking estimates of what may be safe or profitable but rather strive to be worthy of themselves, knowing full well that some things are to be resisted even against a world in arms, and that it is better to lose wealth and armies and very existence rather than suffer their standards to be smirched with dishonour."—ESME STRATTON-WINGFIELD.

THE people at home have their ideas about the soldier, but not less is it the case that the fighting man on the field has his thoughts about the people at home.

For one thing, most of the soldiers the writer has met have very definite ideas on the subject of trade disputes. After making allowance for the fact that there are always "lewd fellows of the baser sort" who will stoop to any low course of conduct, the soldier cannot but conclude that, when numbers of workmen adopt a line of action so readily construed as betrayal of their fellows on the field, there must be substantial reasons for their so doing. He is therefore of opinion that it is always the duty of the Government to make

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impartial enquiry into all these controversies between masters and men. He further holds that if harmonious working cannot be secured on the present basis it is the duty of the Government itself to take over absolutely the manufacture of the necessary material of war, after which, military law being in operation, any defection can be treated in the same way as breaches of discipline in the field. In cases where trade disputes have no justifiable reason behind them, but are solely the work of a few mischief makers, the soldier will not have much pity if such despicable creatures find themselves visited with the utmost rigours of the law.

Again, most of the soldiers the writer has met have very definite ideas on the subjects of recruiting generally, and the conscientious objector in particular. He has not much sympathy with those who never had any intention or expectation of fighting, even though they adhibited their signatures. At the same time he is inclined to hold that all should equally bear the burden of service.

With the average conscientious objector he finds it difficult to sympathise. He can understand anyone advancing such reasons for his exemption as business, dependent relatives, personal unfitness, or the fact that his family is well represented on the field already. But it passes his comprehension to understand how any-

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one can have a "conscientious objection" to taking part in a struggle in which the very existence of conscience itself is at stake. Have the million or so of men at the Front no conscientious objections? For anyone who knows them, to put the question is to answer it. They have enlisted because they understand the issues involved. They are fighting because they know that Prussianism triumphant would be a triumph of immorality. How much does conscience count for to those hordes who marched into battle over international treaty obligations, a march which by now would have been over a "Belgiumised" Britain, but for our brave fellows whose "conscience" told them that now was the time to grasp the sword!

Indeed when anyone declares that he has conscientious objections to resisting this kingdom of darkness in the only known way in which it can be resisted, it is tantamount to confessing that he is not a man, at least in the hitherto accepted meaning of the word. The British soldier of to-day is inclined to think that for any citizen to say that he has conscientious objections to defending the civilisation that has washed him, fed him, taken him out of the gutter and made him the man he is, is nothing short of hypocritical cowardice. If he estimates Britain's worth so lightly let him go elsewhere! His place is not here, nor indeed in any other European

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country. Perhaps there is room for him in the United States !

The British soldier is not without his ideas on matters political. Generally speaking, he is a loyal supporter of the duly appointed powers that be. A smile of amusement, not altogether untouched by contempt, is his silent comment on the ongoings of the few who try to make personal capital out of a nation's embarrassment. If he does open his lips it is perhaps in the sardonic words, "What do they matter anyhow?" Indeed the writer is hardly sure if this is not how he sums up occasionally the day's proceedings at Westminster, "What do they matter anyhow?" To the soldier it goes far beyond a joke that cliques should be allowed to continue their nefarious work of deliberately discrediting His Majesty's Government. Nor can he understand how a certain class of newspaper should be permitted openly to advertise and encourage them in their "low-down game." There are worthy newspapers, and the soldier at the Front, having learnt their value, would not miss them for worlds. But the class that lends itself to be the tool of disreputable cabals should be either reduced to the single sheet of the continental daily journals or suppressed.

There are many other matters on which the British soldier has "views." Needless to say his experience abroad has not adversely affected

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his love for his own country. "Britain, with all thy faults I love thee still." That she has faults he would not be prepared to deny. Failure to grasp the seriousness of the struggle, a faulty perspective, as for example when she behaves as if the capture of a single Zeppelin were of more account than the clash of legions before Verdun, inability to frame an idea of the conditions of warfare at the Front—all these may be laid to her charge. It may be that she behaves sometimes as if winning the war were of less moment than the picture house, the football match, a rise in wages or a glass of beer. And what about the overdue revival of religion in the Churches?

But even when detraction has done its worst her glory is infinitely more than her shame. Her shortcomings are but specks on the sun. Certainly the soldier can find no reason for fault-finding in the manner of his own treatment. When he thinks of even a tithe of all that has been done for him, how Churches and municipalities have vied in planning for his comfort, how the women's fingers have worked for him during all these weary months, he is conscious of feelings that no words can express. He is humbled, and yet he is proud and grateful. He is more. Day by day he makes covenant with himself that he will so fulfil his duty that his citizenship in such an Empire shall be justified.

IX

The Soldier and Religion

"The greatest of all victories is the triumph of social feeling over self-love."—ROUSSEAU.

OF the things that strike one about the British Army, one of the first is the fact that there is not a soldier in it who has not a declared religion.

On the identification disc, which every officer and man is supposed to carry, there is stated, along with the owner's name, the particular religion which he professes. This may mean little or even nothing, as doubtless in many cases the declaration was purely formal, made without thought and dismissed without reflection. How otherwise could we explain the phenomenon that the army lists show nothing of the Atheism, Secularism, Spiritualism, Theosophy and other fancy faiths that blew their trumpets so loudly in the pre-war days?

But even when allowance has been made for the many for whom the declaration was merely formal, and therefore to a large extent meaningless, it must be conceded that there are also many by whom

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the declaration was given in all seriousness, for whom, in short, it was a statement of fact. Underlying these latter cases then, there is a certain religious significance. In regard, say, to one who had "fallen from grace," may we not believe that the giving of a declaration must have acted as a wholesome reminder of his shortcomings? May it not even have proved a fresh starting-point? At any rate, it is a well-known experience that when a man makes a declaration of his faith, which is true and sincere, he is thereby confirmed and established in it. Considering the matter from the various points of view, one may therefore reasonably conclude, that as a result of challenging five million men on the matter of their personal religion a certain religious gain has accrued. The fact already noted that so many men of the new armies carry their Bibles with them at all times is also one of considerable significance from this point of view.

Nor is it too much to suggest that the hearing of the preached Gospel regularly by the entire *personnel* of the armies cannot be without some spiritual result. Church Parade is of course compulsory, unless stated to be otherwise; that is, a man cannot readily absent himself, even if he wanted to do so. Many ministers coming to the army direct from their regular congregational and parochial duties have rejoiced at the large gatherings that assemble, irrespective of weather and

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other conditions that so readily do service as deterrents and excuses for weak-kneed Christians at home. Perhaps as they survey the sea of young eager faces, and contrast this with the wilderness of empty pews they have left, they begin to wonder whether till now their preaching has been properly appreciated, forgetting that many of these well-behaved young auditors are there merely by compulsion, that some are actually groaning under the sermon as if it were penance, that not a few, given a minute's grace, would forthwith make good their escape.

However, not all of the services are compulsory, some are voluntary, and even the latter seldom fail to secure a good representative attendance. And yet even if all the church services were of the compulsory order, it has happened before now that he who has gone against his will has remained of choice, just as there are many interests, which now hold us by their attractiveness, to which the first introduction was by compulsion. In any event—take from the circumstance what one will—the Gospel is being preached to every unit in the British Army.

In the eyes of some it may be a drawback that the preachers are almost always officers in uniform. Not a few visitors to the Front—the Front is an elastic term denoting anything as far back as Rouen or Havre—have returned with the testimony that “the chaplain is doing a good work

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in his own way." One such visitor has actually disposed of them with the jaunty remark, that "the chaplains are splendid fellows, but of course to the Tommy every chaplain is an officer." It is a pity that brother ministers should make such remarks, in which the tone of disparagement is so ill-concealed, especially on the strength of a superficial acquaintance with the facts of the case. The men of the new armies are not "Tommies," they are the mobilised manhood of the Empire. And in most cases the attitude of men to officers is not one of suspicion and aloofness, but of friendship and trust.

It may be admitted that the chaplain's official status has its drawbacks, although, doubtless, there are also compensating advantages. Certainly none is more aware of the chaplain's limitations than the chaplain himself. But in reality it is not a question of the presence or absence of an official status, but of getting the right man, one who can win and keep the confidence of officers and men. Given such a man, he will be helped rather than hindered by his official status, because in addition to everything else that the uniform stands for, it indicates in the chaplain's case that he is part and lot with the men of the armies in every respect, sharing the same experiences, undergoing the like discipline, and subject to the same orders and regulations, without preference, mitigation or escape. His

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uniform likewise gives him free right of approach to all ranks and grades. Men are divided by the soldier into two classes, soldiers and civilians, and as Lord Northcliffe puts it, "It is but natural that soldiers have no use for any but soldiers in war time ; a civilian is an outsider."

It would therefore be unreasonable to suggest that in the case of the right kind of man the drawbacks of an official status outnumber its advantages, just as it would be absurd to maintain that the absence of an official status would render anyone acceptable, who was otherwise unsuited for the work. The main thing is to have the right kind of man. Meanwhile to all interested in the well-being of Britain's fighting lads it is encouraging to be assured, on the authority of competent witnesses, that the conduct of some of the chaplains, while making common lot with their regiments in the hardships and dangers of exposed places on the fighting front, has re-established religion in the esteem of not a few who had come to hold it as of little account.

Facts like the foregoing appear on the surface, but a closer acquaintance leads to further discoveries. The careful observer finds that in no other domain has the war brought about changes of so far-reaching a nature as in that of religion. He will find that the attitude of many towards religion has completely altered. Many who formerly, as civilians, had no place for it in

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their scheme of things, now, as soldiers, regard it and welcome it as a necessity. Many others, who till two years ago made a merely formal profession of religion, have learned by experience that the Christian faith, in the words of Henry Drummond, "alone explains, sustains and completes life." A young soldier, coming out of the trenches, remarked to the writer that for him nearly all the truths of the Christian evangel had assumed a new meaning and reality, but none more so than one for which he had little if any use in his pre-war days—the doctrine of the Hereafter. "I cannot now see," he stated, "how a man's happening to be in the path of a chance flying piece of shell *is going to finish him for ever.*" Doubtless this is typical of the experience of many others.

Is not also the revival of religious ordinances within the war zones a reflection of this deepening of faith? Nowhere is the attention to the preacher's message closer, the singing more fervent, and the whole attitude of the worshipper more reverent and devout than at the Front. Before facing danger the soldier willingly avails himself of the opportunity of invoking the Divine protection. Having come safely through, he turns aside as if by instinct to voice his gratitude. And when a comrade falls, none is more concerned than he that there should be reverent Christian burial. He gladly accepts the gift of a little

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crucifix that it may symbolise his faith, and remind him of his sacred obligations.

In other ways too, the gain to religion appears. For many on the Front their religion has become much more virile and wholesome. Their motto might well be one of St. Paul's, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Prigs and selfish people have no place on the Front line. The enervating bypaths, where flourished much that was exotic, have been forsaken. Subtleties and refinement which furnished material for discussion in days gone by have been forgotten. In the danger-zone no one has time to balance over against Christianity the relative merits of Mohammedanism and Buddhism, Christian Science and Spiritualism, Theosophy and Millennial Dawn! Denominationalism cannot stand shell-fire.

When a man is posted sentry over an enemy's mine that may go up under his feet at any moment, the only two ultimate realities are his soul and his God. The paramount and only possible thing for the soul to do is to commit itself to the Divine keeping. And inasmuch as the only pathway to that consummation is the sacred way which has been lighted up by the life and teaching, the death and deathless life of the Redeemer—it is to come to God through Him. "Lord, I am Thine," breathed Newman, "I am Thine wholly; I ask not to know; I ask not to understand; I ask

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not to see the way. I ask simply to be Thine." Thus may be summed up many a soldier's simple faith.

But perhaps the fighting man's religion appears in no more radiant a light than in that of the cause for which he fights, and the spirit in which he does battle. In that remarkable collection of "Impressions de Guerre" by some of the soldier-priests of France, a certain Father Benoit writes these words, "It is not alone the prospect of death that produces conversions at the Front, it is rather the doing of one's duty. The soldier who is daily losing sight of self in the service of friends and fatherland is very near to the Kingdom of God. Not so much fear as the living on a lofty plane makes Christians of our soldiers at the Front." These are noble words, and while it is most difficult and hazardous to gauge spiritual results, it is on the basis of the truth underlying the French priest's statement that one justifiably claims a credit balance for religion.

There is a debit side. War, in the case of many, produces a hardening of the finer sensibilities. This appears in many ways, even down to the words in common use. If a sensitive person could pass at one step from a drawing-room to a front line billet, he might hear what the soldier calls "some langwidge," and might possibly be shocked. Habits, it may be, have been acquired by some on service which will need to be un-

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learned. Many young men have been taken from their homes at a time when the restraints of home were most in demand.

But, when every deduction has been made, the truth is not with the pessimist nor yet with the optimist, not with the doleful person who bemoans that "military service has sent our young men to the dogs," nor yet with the over sanguine, who reports that the fires of a religious revival are ablaze along the entire Western battle-front. "He who," says Father Benoit, "is daily losing sight of self in the service of friends and fatherland, is near to the Kingdom of God." When we rid ourselves of our religious preconceptions, and take the good priest's elevated standpoint, and when we remember how the hell of the past has been due to the almost universal worship of mammon and the selfish pursuit of wealth, and note that on the battlefield in countless instances "the greatest of all victories," according to Rousseau, has been secured, namely, "the triumph of social feeling over self-love," we come to understand how—on the plains of France and Flanders—even in these drear days of war, our young manhood has been born again.

X

" When the Boys Come Home "

" They come transfigured back,
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays,
Of morn on their white Shields of Expectation ! "

LOWELL.

CAROLLED forth to the swinging stride of marching men, the song rises and falls above the dusty, muddy roads of France and Flanders. It touches one to hear it with its haunting melody and its words that call forth visions, and to see the column winding on until it disappears behind the wood and the music becomes faint and then dies away. And yet one never sees and hears all this without being profoundly stirred. For there are many of the boys who will never come home, and to those who will life can never be the same again. What changes and readjustments are going to be made in every department ! Why, even our common speech is going to be affected by the war, the wag assures us, as is proved by the incorporation of such words as " straf," " wash out," " Blighty," " carry on," and " napur."

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But such trivial things as these are as nothing compared with the changes that will be called for in other departments, and most of all in the Churches. Kipling's couplet may sound little more than a jingle,

" I started as an average Kid
I finished as a thinking Man,"

but the words enshrine a principle which is of considerable significance in the domain of religion. For while there are, no doubt, many whom the experiences of war have left as thoughtless as before, and, sadder still, many who have acquired habits which it will take them some time to unlearn, it is also true that there are many on whom the discipline and the dread experiences of the war, with its constant opening out of the prospect of death, have laid an arresting hand ; many who, setting out with a religious faith, have had that faith confirmed, and many for whom the ideals of Christianity have been reinstated, and probably stand higher to-day than ever. To all such of our fighting men, so profoundly touched, the interests and occupations of the peaceful round may still seem very far away, but the fact remains that one day most of the boys are coming home, and the question is " What are they coming home to ? "

Is it to be merely the old routine ? And yet let us not be too impatient for change. After all,

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many of these battle-trying heroes will ask nothing better than to find things just as they were. In the foreign land, among strangers, their memories have carried thoughts of the distant spire among the trees, and the far-borne chime of Sabbath bells, and merely to be back once more will be a deep draught of satisfaction.

But this mood, more particularly in the case of town and city men, will pass, and again the question arises, Is there any adjustment to be made to meet the needs of our fighting men? Is it to be merely the old routine? It must be admitted outright that the *status quo ante* will not avail. And for anyone to contend that it will avail, to suggest by his policy of do-nothing that all this upheaval, this concentration of cyclone and earthquake can pass, and even if it can, should be permitted to pass, and leave things as they were, would be a dismal proof of the awful petrification into which some good people can fall.

Signs of dissatisfaction with existing things appeared prior to the war. But what were the formation of young men's societies, clubs, and study circles, the drifting of many into strange sects holding stranger tenets, the “ cutting ” of church and the frank disavowal of religion altogether—what were all these but a melancholy comment on the Church's failure? Nor was the sense of failure unfelt by its office-bearers and

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salaried servants. "After a ministry of forty years," said one of the latter to the writer, "I have to confess myself baffled."

For this undesirable condition it is impossible to prescribe a panacea, but after the war one feature must characterise the Church's life everywhere, but more especially in the populous centres, the note of *Business*. In all departments and among all classes there will require to be continually manifested a disposition to be getting on with one's work. There must be a serious bending to our tasks if our pride of place is to be held.

Similarly the Church must bring herself into line by throwing herself in whole-hearted fashion into the business of the Kingdom of God. From the Church, the association of Christ's people in Christ's name for the carrying on of Christ's work, this is the very least that will be expected by the men who have been doing their bit in this bloody business, this most recent phase of the age-long conflict between the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God. While keeping her needle true to the pole of the old evangel, she will raise a trenchant voice against those whose methods of getting gain are of evil odour in the nostrils of the All-Holy wherever they sit enthroned. And these words she will follow up with works. There will be a tuning up all round. Society, beginning from the family and proceeding out-

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wards, must take itself to task, must forthwith commence to exercise a graver diligence in caring for higher things.

Much more than ever she has done in the past will not the Church deliberately set herself the duty of being a Home for her people, and especially for her young men? She must multiply and not diminish her organisations. On new enterprises she will not hesitate to embark. She will assume new tasks, continuing them if they succeed, and “ dropping them,” as Hugh Price Hughes once said, “ like hot potatoes if they fail.” Two black-coated services a Sunday may be very dignified, but duty is more than dignity, and duty here is not to continue Sunday after Sunday sitting at the obsequies of public worship, but to go in quest of a living successor, and, when found, to bring it in and receive it with joyous hospitality. One such service let there be, if desired, in the heart of the day. But let us not hesitate to have others in addition, even up to half a dozen if needed, for young men, children, mothers, young women and working men.

Large memberships should be encouraged; not necessarily large buildings. Better one compact family of a thousand than two with half that number each. In short, it is better to keep an additional two or three hundred people in the warmth of a large congregation than for a zealous “ church extension committee ” to remove them to

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a large brand-new building where their spiritual sap will dry up and they themselves die off. Man is a gregarious animal. A crowd appeals to him. He is attracted to the crowded football match and the crowded political meeting. And he likes the well-filled church and the sensation that when everything else is booming, religion also is a going concern.

By the encouraging of large memberships services would be multiplied, and the buildings would be in constant use, much more so than is the case with most churches at present. Besides, the money spent in maintaining half a dozen fabrics, little used at the most, would go far towards making the buildings which are really necessary, of such beauty and attractiveness that the House of God would not require to hide its head for shame at its tawdry ugliness when compared with the picture palace or even the public house.

Large memberships would require the services of more than one minister, but this might be an advantage, as ministers would then have opportunity to specialise in the work to which fitness has called them. There is the minister who can preach, but cannot organise, another who can organise but cannot preach, and a third who can do neither, yet who has a genius for getting close to people in private interviews, and for receiving their confidences and sympathetically sharing their

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burdens. At present our system demands that a minister shall give himself to every aspect of religious work irrespective of his personal bent or fitness. To satisfy the needs of a people he requires to be something of orator, scholar, business manager, commercial traveller, journalist, and society entertainer. And when, as it is at present, the clerical ideal is “the scholar,” it can be understood why in many congregations the results are so disastrous. With large memberships and something approaching the idea of a staff of workers, the system would not flourish by the sacrifice of the individual.

But a most important gain from the encouragement of large congregations would be an increased ability on the part of the churches to minister to the social wants of their people, and specially their men. Work along these lines is capable of almost endless development. This is a business that is largely left to commercial enterprise and in the main it is well done. But whenever in providing for our people's social needs commercial enterprise constantly disregards Christian ideals, it is then time for the church to take action on its own behalf. Many a chaplain to the forces has had to face this duty on the field, and not seldom the running of canteens and recreation rooms have carried him right to the soldier's heart, when, according to the latter, the sermons were a “wash-out.”

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More than one Padre has come to the conclusion that the Church, Biblical, Aggressive, Simple and Hospitable, which will appeal to the returned soldier, must also be a Church United. The withdrawing of people into sects, each believing itself to be the possessor of truth's final synthesis, and with a holy oath excommunicating the others, was never at any time a thing of loveliness. In any case denominationalism has received a nasty, if not a "knock-out" blow on the plains of Flanders, where the chaplains of all the Churches have met as brethren on a common enterprise. Indeed for the nation's manhood after the war the former distinctions will be found to be greatly modified if not destroyed, the only people for whom they will still exist being the representatives of a bygone age, sitting in their studies, and, by an effort of will, repeating the old shibboleths.

Many a chaplain, too, who has hitherto dwelt within the folds of "voluntaryism" has received his remuneration through official channels, and has been surprised to find himself innocent of any suspicion that his spiritual liberty was affected, or his loyalty to his Master in the least imperilled. And not a few have wondered whether this is a step in their education providentially granted with a view to making them less averse to having the Church of the democratic State supported through State channels.

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However that may be, it is incontestable that the Church suffers from a lack of resources commensurate with the tasks on hand. Because although the coffers overflow in times of revival, and in the case of fortunately placed congregations, such times and such congregations are the exception, for the work of the Church is in the main that of the somewhat prosaic campaign. It is unseemly, too, that the State should leave, and that the Church should be willing to leave, the great business of the Kingdom of God to the mercies of a haphazard charity, especially when, as no one will deny, the provision set apart in this way is miserably disproportionate, not merely to the country's ever increasing resources, but to what is being squandered in useless and even harmful ways.

There is nothing essentially illogical or revolting in the idea that a democratic State should support its Church. It subsidises the carrying of the mails, what more “ the bringing of the Good Tidings ” ? There are public institutions which without State aid would immediately be *in extremis*. And with all its triumphs there is in the records of voluntarism much that none of its supporters have any reason to be proud of, much wrong and shame. Is it a good thing that in the minds of the poor the worship of God should be so often associated with the paying of money ?

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It is said that religion should "pay its way." Can this statement be defended? Is there anything in the nature of the case that entitles us to expect the Church to pay its way? "I don't envy you your job," said a commercial traveller to the writer, "my customers are expecting me, but you are in the unfortunate position of trading in a commodity which everybody needs but nobody wants." If this commercial traveller speaks the truth, that the Church is supplying what everybody needs and nobody wants, it is a safe conclusion that no great margin for working expenses is to be derived from such a poor business. An army does not pay its way. An army is a spending not an earning department. And the Church is the Army of the Living God.

A Church, Biblical, Evangelical, Aggressive, Hospitable, United, and with its own slender resources augmented by the nation in a manner commensurate with the magnitude and glory of its tasks, these are adjustments which the dawn of the new age calls us forth to consider. In any case, for the Church's credit, if not by way of gratitude to her sons, something must be done, if a God-given opportunity is not to be irretrievably, tragically and culpably lost "when the Boys come Home."

XI

The Cure of Souls

"Memory has the wonderful power of rejecting all the dreary *débris* of life and preserving only the pure gold a thousand times refined."—A. C. BENSON.

IF even a few of the amusing things that happen at the Front were gathered together the collection would crown and supersede the jest anthologies of all time. It is well that such material exists, for never since Erasmus wrote in Praise of Folly has laughter been of such capital importance. Amid the experiences of war there is occasionally enough to turn a man's hair white in the course of a single night. After the war the young men who went forth to battle will be young no longer. Consequently the men with a keen sense of humour, an eye for the ridiculous and a ready wit, are to be reckoned as among the saviours of their country. Whatever else the average British soldier possesses he has an eye for the funny side of things. "*Toujours gai, toujours content*," is how the Frenchman sums him up, and without doubt his staying power has been much aided by

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this knack of extracting amusement even out of tragedy, a gift which has found in the war an opportunity-*de-luxe* for its exercise.

Of the things that, short of being funny, merely distract the attention from sadder preoccupations the chaplain has a full share. Except for weddings and christenings his duties may be said to include the full round of a minister's work at home; and at the Front, as everyone knows, the sadder side predominates. But there is much to take him out of the beaten round of a minister's ordinary interests. Indeed, that minister will probably make but a very indifferent chaplain, who comes to the Front with hard and fast ideas regarding his work, who is going to be the parson and nothing more, or who is going to keep in the forefront his own narrow notions on Church government, ritual, dogma and denomination-alisms. Concerns of this kind do not interest the average British soldier to the extent of two straws, and chaplains of this kind are very soon given to understand that for such as he the soldier has no use.

To succeed even moderately with the soldiers the chaplain must be the man first and the minister second. In the best sense of the word he must be all things to all men, readily accommodating himself to persons and circumstances, both in his private interviews and in his methods of work. In the actual working out of his

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programmes he will leave to Providence a much larger part than, it may be, has been his practice. The chaplain's ministry—after the pattern of the great Exemplar's—will be largely “a ministry of interruptions.”

Accordingly he will occasionally find himself the “handyman of the regiment,” and not seldom immersed in the kind of duties which he shrank from when at home. He will find himself running the regimental or brigade canteen and recreation rooms, although like the Y.M.C.A., with regard to the third letter of its title, he will probably resist the temptation to substitute “catering” for “Christian.” For the benefit of the young officer who finds it difficult to arrange an interview with the field cashier he will probably assume the serious responsibilities of Money-lender. At one time or other he will be Mess-president, Commissionaire, Purchaser, Interpreter, Custodian of Soldiers' Treasures, Confidant and General Factotum. He may have to referee a football match or take a turn at a concert. Before an attack he will be entrusted with letters which he is only to post in case the writers of them do not return alive. Contrary to all law and order a chaplain once acted as O.C. in charge of a party of soldiers proceeding from England to the Front! In the discharge of such duties as these he may not find hilarity, but at any rate he is lifted above the mill-round path of a Padre's ordinary work,

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and finds a pleasant distraction from the sadder side of war.

But it is not merely the spice of variety that so happily touches up the monotony of the chaplain's duties. There occasionally turns up the sort of incident that makes an irresistible appeal to his sense of humour—not often, but occasionally, like the plum in the midshipman's pudding, the appearing of which, we are told, is greeted with loud cheers.

To the chaplain there are few things more interesting than the almost endless variety of congregations he has to address. A period of service of no great length is all that is necessary to give a preacher a run of congregations in which are represented nearly all the different units of the British Army—infantry, gunners, doctors, grooms, ammunition column, flying men, service corps, cyclists, medical orderlies, engineers and cavalry, convalescents, new battalions going in, and wounded men coming out, and even the prisoners with whom they were a few hours previously locked in deadly conflict. Amid such variety it is not always easy to suit the message to the occasion, but as a rule the preacher takes pains to prevent the text and discourse from being altogether inappropriate, even to the extent of getting into touch with the men previously, and, so to speak, reconnoitring the situation. In this connection a chaplain once asked one or two of

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the men on the Saturday afternoon what he ought to preach about the following morning. "Almost any good gospel text," was the reply, "only don't waste your time damning the Kaiser; we can all do that pretty effectively for ourselves."

On one occasion, however, a chaplain contrived to make a most conspicuous *faux pas*. Before a group of men drawn up in a hollow square he was putting his whole heart into an address on "equanimity," based on the recurring injunctions of the sixth of Matthew, "Be not over anxious." He was labouring an exposition of "Take no thought, saying, 'What shall we eat?'" when, as in a glimpse of sunshine on an otherwise cloudy day, he saw his congregation as they really were, a gathering of *Bakers*, many of whom, still in their bakehouse clothes, had hurried from toiling at the task of preparing rations and daily bread. With a choking sensation about the throat the poor Padre gradually struggled towards his own equanimity, feeling like the lady who had thrust a tract against dancing upon a man with a wooden leg!

The chaplain usually receives the closest attention from both officers and men, in keeping with their general bearing at divine service, which is exemplary, both at the devotions, where the attitude is reverent, and in the praise in which, when appropriately selected and well led, everyone joins with great heartiness. But it is not safe

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to assume that all who seek the Padre's billet afterwards are earnest enquirers after the truth. After a tactful tribute to the helpfulness of the discourse which throws the guileless preacher, who like other humans is susceptible to a little touch of compliment, completely off his guard, there may come a request for help in the matter of getting leave, or for an advance of five francs against the next pay-day.

A chaplain who had recently joined a new unit noticed two men following his discourse with apparently eager interest, even to the extent of exchanging significant glances as, time and again, —so thought the preacher—the truth was being driven home. Accordingly it was with pleasurable anticipation that shortly afterwards he saw their shadows darkening the doorway of his billet. From their demeanour in the service he was certain they had come to admit that they had been impressed, or at least to propound some religious difficulty. The purport of the interview was not long concealed, "If you please, sir, we hope you won't take it amiss, but you invited us to ask you questions, and for a long time me and my mate has been discussing it, and as there's now a bit o' money on it we thought we would just ask you, by way of accepting your invitation as it were. You couldn't tell us, could you, whether our last Padre had a glass eye?" The Padre had an optical weakness but not the affection alleged.

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The services are held in all sorts of places, and all over the western battle-front there is many a spot "where prayer was wont to be made" that will always be hallowed in the chaplain's memory. And yet into those places, transfused with the sublime, there occasionally obtrudes a touch of the bizarre. On one occasion a chaplain was conducting a service in a field. Two calves were grazing close by, and for a time manifested no interest whatever in the proceedings. But whether it was that the melody of the hymns moved them from the succulent pasture, or a note in the chaplain's intonation touched a responsive chord, they soon invaded the hollow square and gave both ocular and oral evidence of their presence and interest, until it became necessary to have them expelled, which, however, was not accomplished before they had upset the two boxes that did duty as rostrum, greatly to the preacher's discomfiture. The matter was duly cleared up next day by the mess-room wit. "Don't you see, padre," was his explanation, "that they were perfectly well behaved until you got to that text in the lesson about 'killing the fatted calf!' No self-respecting stirk was going to listen to such rude measures against a remote ancestor without a protest."

Sometimes, however, the chaplain gets a bit of his own back again. Proceeding to a small billet meeting one afternoon a friend of mine noticed a

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traction engine by the roadside. As he passed, a rush of steam came from the safety-valve with the usual hissing noise, an alarming sound when heard near the front, because of its close resemblance to that of falling shells. The meeting was not long in progress when the same sound recurred. Instantly the fifteen or twenty people present threw themselves flat on the floor. But in the Padre's case fore-warned was fore-armed. With the utmost sangfroid, but with difficulty concealing the twinkle in his eye, he said he was pleased to note their susceptibility to religious impression, but that if possible all excess should be avoided; that in any case there was something distasteful in introducing these prostrations, which belonged more properly to the rites and customs of oriental religions; and that for himself he preferred the wholesome teaching of a text from the Old Testament, which in the circumstances he pressed upon them, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee."

If the chaplain "plays the game" in a manly and straightforward way he wins and retains the confidence of his unit and not infrequently becomes a prime favourite with all ranks. It is the natural working out of the principle which Emerson thus expresses, "If a man faithfully and diligently love and serve his fellow-man he cannot by any hiding or stratagem escape his reward." Sometimes, however, the appeal he

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makes is, from the man's point of view, very different from what he intended. Two north-country soldiers were one day heard discussing the departure of their chaplain on the completion of his year of service, one of the most high-toned evangelical preachers who had visited the Front. "An' the minister's awa' hame," said the first, "it's a peety they couldna' ha' kept him." "Aye," rejoined the second, "yon was something like a padre; (then, after a pause,) man, I hope they don't send in his place ane o' thae awfu' releegious anes." It was a strangely worded but splendid testimony to the departing chaplain, who had given of his best to the men for a year, and at the same time an interesting sidelight on the kind and quantity of religion that the average fighting man can stand.

No chaplain completes his period of service without registering again and again his appreciation of the facilities that are freely accorded him for the carrying out of his duties. King's regulations declare that the chaplain shall be treated with all the courtesy due to his rank, and the additional respect due to his calling. Except in a few negligible instances this attitude has been so scrupulously observed that any chaplain who nurses a grievance in this connection has probably to look no further than within himself for what is in large measure the explanation. The almost universal experience is of the opposite nature.

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Officers with religious sympathies make it their business to render the chaplain all the help in their power, to encourage him in his work, and to surround him with the atmosphere that renders his work a pleasure. And they are never slow to express in ways both direct and indirect their hearty appreciation of services rendered. Even of officers and men with no very pronounced leanings towards religion it may be admitted that they show a gentlemanly and scrupulous respect for the chaplain's convictions, and place no obstacles in his way.

Nothing, however, pleases a mess-room better than a laugh at the Padre's expense, and occasionally circumstances provide an amusing contretemps to gratify their mischievous delight. On one occasion a Catholic chaplain, a friend of the writer, announced to the orderly room that there would be Vespers and Benediction the following evening at 6.30. Unfortunately this appeared in next day's orders as "Vespers and *Benedictine*." Great was the mirth throughout the entire division. The malicious report was set in circulation that the notice attracted a much larger congregation than usual.

These are a few of the brighter memories that stand out against the sombre background of war's realities. For there is no language adequate to describe war's horrors. Like all divine punishments it is of a disciplinary

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order leading to better things. But it is a punishment indescribable and inconceivable in all its blackness and bitterness. To every chaplain it has been a golden experience that he should thus have been permitted to go with his fellows into the dark valley. Long after the angel of peace has returned he will recall all the way he has travelled. There has been much shadow but he will think mostly of the sunshine, for as Mr. A. C. Benson puts it, "memory has a wonderful power of rejecting the dreary *débris* of life, and preserving only the pure gold a thousand times refined." As in a dream he will revisit all the places where he gathered with the fighting men to worship God—the little hall of the *Mairie*, the dockyard, the horse lines, behind the guns, the communication trench, the dimly-lit disused factory, the courtyard of the ruined *château* or beneath the shattered trees behind, the hall of the *estaminet*, redolent of beer and stale tobacco, but made fragrant by the songs of Judah, the fields and hillsides in the fog and snow or mud of bleak November, and again clothed in the verdure of returning spring, the marquee, barn and country church, when the preacher's voice was drowned by the noises of war, the little cemetery, or under the outstretched arms of the Calvary at the village cross-roads. Ah, where are all these valiant sons of the empire now? And more than that, much too sacred for words, he recalls the little gatherings

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for prayer, heart to heart talks on these country highways under the stars, the stretcher and sick-bed, and the "solemn hour of the dying."

In one of his biographical studies Viscount Morley tells of the effect upon himself of the perusal of a document which came under his notice in the preparation of the work. "The mere reading of the good man's letter," he says, "affects one like a religious exercise." Similarly the chaplain's memories have peopled the private sanctuary of his heart with symbols that will ever evoke his adoration. They have been deep laid among his treasures, and built into the foundation things of his being—his beliefs, convictions and aspirations. Through the nightmare of the war they ever and anon return like great white-winged birds across his soul.

XII

The Aftermath of War

" Birds shall sing in the branches,
Children dance by the shore ;
But they who shared the red reaping
Shall come back never more.
Let whoso can forget them,
Walking life's noisy ways ;
We who have looked on the Reapers
Go quietly, all our days."

L. MACLEAN WATT.

MANY a chaplain sees much of the fighting. Not a few, when the command came, have been unable to resist going over the parapet with the men. But whether they see much of the fighting or not, they all have a larger acquaintance than most with the sequel. At the Front there is much that uplifts. One recalls concerts and sing-songs where the hilarity often reached the point of abandon, where in some old barn, amid an atmosphere in which one's vision was sorely put to it to descry with any clearness objects even two yards away, the united effort of five hundred

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voices almost brought down the rafters with such highly intellectual efforts as,

“ Straf the Kaiser, straf the Huns,
Straf the beggars that invented guns,
Straf the army, straf the war,
O what a set of jolly fools we are ! ”

And how constantly the pervading spirit is one of *bonhomie*, optimism and wonderful keenness ! When the Fifteenth Division was moving on to Loos, I don't know how many young soldiers to whom I spoke, opened with the remark, “ Is it far yet to the Germans ? ” Brave young lads, so many of whom were to die soon after !

But with all that is uplifting there is a sadness from which there is no escape, and of this the chaplain necessarily sees a full share. Perhaps he arrives at the Base a week or two after a severe engagement, when the more slightly wounded have recovered or have been sent across to the hospitals at home, and only the more serious remain. What sadness ! The wards are almost filled with wounded, all of them serious, many critical, not a few hopeless. In this abode of suffering there are representatives from the entire Empire, both the home countries and all the overseas dominions. Here is a young Canadian whom duty's call summoned from the far North-West. “ Gun-shot wound in the head ” is his trouble. Everything seemed to be going well, but meningitis

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has supervened, and now he is sinking. There is something or other he wishes to tell the chaplain of his boyhood's home near Glasgow, but his brain refuses the task, and now his thoughts are on his Canadian farm. Another young lad, his nerves unstrung with suffering, is calling piteously for his mother. "Oh, sir," gasps a third with catching breath, "I shall never see Stornoway again." A victim of the most devilish of all war's devices, asphyxiating gas, he has the appearance of one who has reached the last stage of consumption. The nursing sister passes a look that signifies there is no hope. And the chaplain before moving on leaves a brief message and receives the assurance of resignation and calm trust.

And yet even in the house of woe there is something to provoke a smile, as, for example, the young fellow whose cries of pain guided me to the room upstairs where he was lying, and who on my entry interrupted his piteous moaning to enquire if the piece of shrapnel which had been taken from his ankle was still under the bed, as he wished to take it home as a souvenir, and, on being assured that it was still there, forthwith resumed his dolorous plaint, with, if anything, much increased intensity.

But it is when the chaplain goes up country, to the area of the Casualty Clearing Stations and Field Ambulances, that the tragic side of war comes home to him in its appalling reality.

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Clearing Stations and Field Ambulances are, as their names suggest, well defined units, the latter operating right up to the fighting zone, the former acting as receiving and despatching houses for sick and wounded, receiving from the Field Ambulance on the one hand and passing on to the hospitals further down on the other.

At a group of these Casualty Clearing Stations the chaplain arrives, let us say, on the eve of a general engagement. The hour of his arrival is late, and lying on his improvised bed in tent or any suitable outhouse he can find in the dark, he passes a somewhat disturbed night owing to the thunder of the guns, such a volume of artillery that it is impossible to distinguish separate reports, the whole resembling nothing so much as the boiling of a gigantic cauldron. All next day the battle rages, and then the following morning the stream of wounded men begins to flow in.

A weird sight it is to begin with, as looking from the window of the billet he has now secured, he sees in the grey light of three on a summer's morning the long convoy of motor buses drawing slowly past. In the dawn he can descry that they are crowded in and out with wounded men, men in every sort of outlandish make-up, many hatless, some without tunics or at any rate sleeves to the same, not a few with any sort of covering across their shoulders, all of them patched up and bandaged, and most of them brandishing some

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German trophy or other, a rifle, bayonet or *pickelhaube* (one of them afterwards would not part with his for five pounds). But the astonishing feature was their mirth. Whether due to the reaction after severe nerve strain, or an excess of joy at being out of it for a spell, they sang and shouted and waved their booty in a manner much more suggestive of a bean-feast than a recent return from the jaws of death.

But these were only the slightly wounded ; the more serious cases were to follow. That night and during the whole of the next day, from Dressing Station, Aid Post and Field Ambulance, the motor-waggons made their way to the Casualty Stations in converging streams of convoys and processions that seemed as if they would never end. Handsome motor waggons these are; the principal part, the chassis, being the best that money can buy; the roofs and walls of canvas of a dull grey, the colour of the roads they traverse; and on either side and on the front the gleaming cross of scarlet. The wounded may be "sitting" or "lying" cases. If the latter they repose on stretchers in a rack or frame, two on either side of the car, one above the other. Under the rear flap of the cars as they go swishing by the sympathetic wayfarer catches a hurried glimpse of the melancholy burden. A stockinged foot, or a boot with trench mud still adhering protruding from under the rough brown

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military blanket, proclaims in dumb eloquence the horrors of war, and envisages a sorrow-stricken home beyond the seas.

And now these melancholy convoys reach their destination, the extemporised hospital—a church, a school, an asylum, seminary or factory, or even a canvas encampment. Slowly the streams of traffic are directed round by the military police to the points where the burdens are unloading. The sitting cases step down unattended. And there is immortality for the artist who can set down a faithful portrayal of these motley throngs, fresh with their scars from the inferno of a modern battle. The lying cases have to be unloaded very gently, and here orderlies, working on, as they have done for many hours, in shirt and trousers in the intense heat of the midsummer day, carefully pull the stretchers from their rests and bear them inside to the reception room, where all particulars such as number, rank, name, regiment, religion and nature of wound are carefully scheduled, and then on to the ward where surgeons and nurses are waiting.

To-day the rush of wounded is so great that the space within is congested, and stretchers with their precious burdens overflow into the passages and even on to the ground outside. As one stands by witnessing this pathetic work and offering consolation and help as best one can, one is carried away in a surge of feeling that no words

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can describe. This is the Christlike toil of attending to the wounded, as it has been going on during the continuance of the war. Conditions have varied. For summer's dust and sunshine there have been mud and snow, frost and driving rain, when the canvas camps in Flanders became the very "abomination of desolation." But without halt or slacking the work has gone steadily on.

Passing within, one feels that there is an even further demand on one's emotions. This particular station was a seminary in pre-war days, where young priests bathed their spirits in those bracing influences that sent them into the Church as doughty champions for Christ and right. To-day these long corridors and dormitories and spacious halls are a soldiers' hospital. You make a way for yourself among the throng of stretcher-bearers, and turning to the left along a passage you reach two folding doors which you push gently open. You stare in open-eyed wonder at the sight. It is a large apartment, perhaps a hundred and twenty feet long by forty or fifty broad, but it is no exaggeration to say that the floor is so covered by stretchers and recumbent figures that there is not anywhere room so much as to put down a chair. You are inside and, having begun the journey of visitation, you have perforce to continue it; which you in a manner accomplish, by dint of carefully stepping from

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the edge of one stretcher over the prostrate body on to the edge of another.

What a panorama ! Here are men from all the units that have been engaged, representatives of all the Britannic dominions. Even the enemy are here, finding a haven of rest, and receiving the same treatment, and glad, as they testified to the writer, to have such good luck ; men of Würtemberg, and Thuringia, and Hanover, lying alongside those to whom only a few hours before they were sworn and deadly foes. You look around you. What a variety of wounds ! Is there a part of the human body that has wholly escaped—limbs, shoulders, sides, skull, face, feet and hands ? And what a variety of causes ! The entire ghastly catalogue of war's devices—machine gun, shell, mine, grenade, trench-mortar, bayonet, gas—is represented here. The windows are open to the breeze, if the warm breath of a continental summer can be so designated. But notwithstanding this, the atmosphere is heavy, the atmosphere of a crowd and earth and blood and sores that wait attention. Such is the sight. And this is reproduced in every room in the building and in every station in the area. What does Christ think of all this ? For once the chaplain agrees with a German prisoner, an Alsatian, fighting against his will, " Sir, all this should never have been, someone has tragically blundered." We know who.

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It is amazing how quickly the work of evacuation is carried through. One traverses these same wards two days after. The wounded have been removed to the comparative comfort of the hospitals further down. Everything is now swept and garnished. Repose reigns. One can hardly believe oneself in the same place. The previous day comes back merely like the memory of an evil dream.

One's visit to the dressing and operating rooms, strange to say, does not come as such a climax to the foregoing as one would expect. It is not so much that the finer sensibilities are hardened, as that one is prepared, with the result that the visitor finds himself acquiescing in the situation, and perhaps reproaches himself for it. All the same, what of horror one failed to feel in the actual presence of it, one experiences in augmented measure in the retrospect.

In the ante-room cases of "shell-shock" are being treated. One man has lost his hearing, another his speech, another is almost blind, several have "jumpy nerves," not a few are "off their head." The blinded cases are specially sad. Into the chaplain's hands they confide for safe despatch letters like the following: "Darling, I have been in a scrap and am almost blinded. I am trying to write this by guess, but I can't see what I am putting down. I hope you will be able to read it."

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Here is a young fellow wandering aimlessly about the room, tunicless, boots unlaced, six inches of his trousers turned up at the bottom, his eyes rolling, hair on end, a cigarette stuck behind his ear. "Well, where are you going, sonny?" enquires the Staff-sergeant sympathetically, for he understands. "To England," is the reply. "To England, why to England?" "Because it is the Lord's will." "Quite right," replies the sergeant, "and (handing him an evacuation tag) there's your ticket for England, and mind you don't lose it. I'll see you travel first-class." He is one of the considerable number who become unbalanced by the strain of mine and mortar and high explosive. But he will come all right, so the specialist assures us. Far from the scenes of warfare, perhaps amid the pastoral tranquillity of England he will be restored, like the cripple who has been dipped in some healing well.

Passing the ante-room door a different sight meets the chaplain's gaze. Here attendants, orderlies, nurses and medical officers are in the business-like garb of the operating theatre. Everywhere there are the gleam of utensils and instruments, the glitter of white enamelled tables and walls, the odour of dressings and anæsthetics. A brawny fellow is on a table and not the united efforts of half a dozen attendants can keep him down, so terrible is his struggling; but the

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anæsthetic is applied and soon he drops over in sleep. Here is a poor man with both feet almost blown away by hand grenade, another cruelly torn inside by shrapnel. On a stretcher just borne in is as fine a specimen of young manhood as one could hope ever to look upon. One could think of him as the pride of a most superior home. But a crimson mark on either temple of that intellectual and even noble head indicates how the bullet has travelled right through the brain from side to side. The surgeon feels the pulse, raises one of the eyelids, sadly shakes his head, and murmurs "Too late," and the stretcher is removed. Here is another with the lower left side of the face carried away by shell. The chin is propped up, the opening of the mouth now extends right across the cheek and backward to the ear, hardly any flesh remains. But why prolong the awful catalogue? Right through the duration of the war this has been going on without cessation, and after any sort of engagement the extent of it is multiplied many times over. Amongst it the chaplain offers his services. He speaks, he prays, he offers to write to friends. But he continually feels how very little any service he renders can avail here.

Then comes the evacuation when the wounded are transferred to the Red Cross trains. These are not far from the Clearing Station. In some cases where the station is a camp they are drawn

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up on the railway alongside. The task of receiving, attending to and once more passing on such numbers of wounded men is one of very considerable proportions. On one occasion as many as fifteen hundred, on another twenty-four hundred, were passed through in twenty hours.

Even an experience of the actual Front, the front of fire-line, support-trenches, and shelled villages, has little if anything to add to the impressions of war's destructive work on life and limb which one has received in the Ambulances and Stations from five to ten miles further back. The chaplain's feelings are often wrung when brave men fall, because now these men are honoured comrades and in not a few instances well-beloved friends. But save after a very big engagement when the work of burying the dead seems endless, the chaplain never has so overwhelming a sense of the effect of war's bloodiness as that which holds him like an obsession for days after he has seen twenty-five hundred wounded men pass through a station in four-and-twenty hours.

And yet even at the Front death and wounds are an aspect of warfare from which there is no escape. The sniper's deadly bullet is continually claiming its toll. Trench mortar and grenade knock out men in twos and threes. The destructive mine goes up, putting out of action anything up to half a company. Into trench or billet are

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hurled thirty or forty heavy high explosive shells, and woe betide whoever is in the way! Down drops an aeroplane with the poor bruised bodies of pilot and observer. Accidents also take place, when lives that we can so ill afford are lost in the machine gun or bombing school. And the honoured dead have to be prepared for burial and brought to a mortuary, and graves made ready, and the last sad offices of faith and love carried through, all of which duties partly or exclusively fall to the chaplain's lot. Many a dreadful sight he witnesses, as for example the recovering of the dead from the billet into which shells have fallen. And many an awful task he undertakes, duties which up to a year and a half ago he would have thought himself incapable of facing.

But one becomes accustomed to the sight of blood. "How are you standing up to this?" asked the writer of a brother chaplain at the end of a period of eight weeks, which had been particularly trying. "Oh," he replied, "I'm doing my best, and I generally carry through most that falls to my hands to be done. But one thing I confess breaks me down, when friends and comrades fall and I have to gather their remains together with a spade!" These words were not spoken lightly with no other intention than to shock, but were uttered sadly and sincerely by a tender and sensitive spirit, a man of high culture and deep religious feeling.

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The R.A.M.C. is one of the most noble departments of the King's Service. When peace is signed, and their labours are at an end, there is one further duty we shall expect of them—none more qualified to do it effectively—to give a few of their experiences of "The Aftermath," when fools begin to deblatterate on the "Glories of War."

XIII

"All in the Day's Work"

" Just a lot of amateurs,
Picking up a trade,
Drilling hard and keen to learn
How a war is made.
Some from crowded city streets,
Some from moor and fen,
Mine and plough, but good enow,
Seeing they are Men."

TOUCHSTONE.

ON returning from service everyone is asked sooner or later whether he has been mixed up in any incident of special interest or excitement. To tell the truth, this is the kind of question that no one cares to answer, for the simple reason that in this war everyone's experience has been more or less similar. Leaving out of account the men who have done something very unique, such as bringing down a Zeppelin or navigating a submarine under the Dardanelles' minefield, or some such deed of heroism, in which the soldier takes a thousand-to-one chance against himself, and comes through all right to win high distinction, there is a remainder whose experiences are very much alike

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containing no end of incidents which, if contrasted with the peace standard, would be regarded as hugely exciting, but which the soldier now dismisses with the remark, "It's all in the day's work."

Consequently, if you put this question to a company of officers or men who have seen service on the actual line, "What do you reckon your most exciting experience since coming to the Front?" probably most of them would reply, "Going on leave." It would not be the first German they killed, or being blown up by a mine, or the time when their dug-out came in about their ears, or when they first went over the parapet. But they would recall perhaps a steaming hot bath, which they struck unexpectedly after having been in the mud of the trenches for twenty-four days, or they would think of that fine parcel of fish which some good friend managed to get sent up from the coast, and which came as an event after days of stew and bully; or they would recollect some such incident as going back to an army school for a week, or, as has been said, going on leave, the joys of getting the warrant, taking one's place in the train, embarking with a crowd of happy boys let loose, and finding oneself in the streets of London once more.

In the soldier's unwritten code modesty is not the least important article. Anything therefore that savours of boasting either on his own part or

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on that of others is despised. Perhaps he feels that there has been something going on at home too. What with Zeppelin raids and other dangers, life does not seem a bit more secure in England than in France. There have been soldiers who have come through all the perils of trench warfare to fall by a stray bullet in the streets of their own city, to be blown to pieces while explaining the inner working of a bomb to their friends at home, or to perish in a railway disaster. No wonder if the soldier exclaims, “What price the trenches after that?”

And yet no doubt life on the Line to everyone, whatever his rank, and whether he has done anything conspicuous or not, is full of interesting and even exciting experiences; and all the more so, because of the glorious uncertainty in which everything is wrapped, and the unexpectedness with which things happen. Sometimes these happenings are not connected with any initiative or action on the enemy's part at all. Most moving incidents have taken place in bombing schools and machine gun classes, where, owing to mischance, men have been wounded and mutilated, and, in some cases, lives have been lost. The story is told that a bombing officer was one day warning his class against using liberties with a particular type of missile, even to the extent of tapping it with the hand. “You must not do that, gentlemen,” he said; but unfortunately he suited the action to the

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word, and patted the machine with his hand, doubtless, as he thought, very gently. But it was enough. The bomb exploded with dreadful results. It is to be hoped that similar cases cannot be indefinitely multiplied. But it is well known that they are not uncommon.

An officer in charge of one of our stationary observation balloons—"Sausages" they are called—lost his life in a most tragic way. Two or three days previously there had appeared in the French newspapers an account of how a French officer had by great presence of mind saved his life. His balloon had broken adrift in a storm, and was being blown right across towards the enemy lines, when he resorted to his parachute as a means of escaping a prisoner's fate, or perhaps death. Fortunately, his parachute served him well. He made a good descent within his own lines and he was rewarded with the high commendation of the authorities. Perhaps this incident turned our men's attention to the parachute and impressed them with the need of practising descents; perhaps it was some other reason. In any case, descents were attempted. From the balloon, which was floating at a height of four thousand feet, first the corporal made the attempt, and was successful. Then followed the officer, but, alas, for some reason or other, the parachute failed to open, with the result that the poor fellow was dashed to the earth.

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This happened but a few days after the bringing down from right over head of a German aeroplane, one of those “Birds of Hell,” as a friend of the writer aptly and tersely terms them. It was a beautiful summer morning, the sun shining in a cloudless sky, when we noticed above us two enemy planes, their wings looking like gossamer against the light, and the black “Iron Crosses” almost distinguishable by the naked eye. They were clearly asking for “trouble,” because they were flying in a slow and stately fashion side by side, somewhat after the manner of two swans making a progress across a lake. And they were flying very low as well, at a height of not more than six thousand feet. Our guns were soon all out on them and made wonderful practice too, at times to the naked eye being quite on the spot. Soon the sky behind and around them was flecked with the white smoke-puffs of the bursting shells, and looking at the amount of ammunition spent in vain, one began to be prepared for their getting completely away. But it was not to be. From somewhere there darted into the area of conflict one of our own planes which headed straight for the two, the aviator firing his machine gun as he went, a very heroic thing to do, considering the risk he ran from our own shells. Whether this brave fellow’s entry on the scene was the determining factor or whether it was that a shell took effect was not

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quite clear. But in any case, one of the enemy planes staggered somewhat, lurched and plunged from side to side. Then the body of it, becoming detached from the wings, fell to earth like a stone, while the wings drifted away on a cruise of their own, seemed to crumple up, and turning idly over and over, like a yellow canvas blind blown off by the wind, fluttered to earth a mile away. It was a victory for our air defences, and a tragic ending to the German aviators. I had the melancholy duty of examining the pocket book of the dead pilot. Among other things it contained his pay book, a photograph of a young woman, and a written prayer asking that if he stumbled in his flight, the Saviour might be with him in his last agony. Enemy as he was he had lived by the three principles, love of his kith and kin, love of country, and the love and service of God; and in these principles he had also died. In our Soldiers' Cemetery next day we laid the two mangled bodies to rest.

Speaking of aeroplanes being shelled, one is reminded of the question that is often discussed, as to whether the pieces of shell come to earth. It may be taken for granted that they do. Coming in from a journey one day an officer told the writer how, when passing under a German aeroplane which was being shelled by our guns, the small pieces of shell were falling all around him, and "jolly glad he was that he was wearing

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his tin hat.” Certainly rifle bullets that are fired into the air come down, as the writer can testify from personal knowledge. I remember a plane being fired at by hundreds of rifles one afternoon in the town of Arras, and the spent bullets falling on the roofs of the houses like large hailstones. Sometimes something more serious than a bullet or a small piece of shell descends. Proceeding one quiet Sunday morning to take service in a village a mile or so away, I was aroused from meditation by the guns shelling a German aeroplane almost overhead. My mind moved rapidly from one train of thought to another, beginning with a protest against the quiet of the Sunday being disturbed in this fashion, and passing through other stages until I had reached the question how it was that none of the pieces of shell were coming down. I had not long to wait for an answer. Down came, not a stray piece, but a *whole shell* which exploded in the ground not far away.

This first experience of being made the target for dropping bombs is always more or less memorable. The dominating feeling, if there is no very deep dug-out in which to shelter, is one of helplessness, and the margin between a mere incident and a tragedy is sometimes a very narrow one. A brother chaplain on one occasion when his camp was being bombed, having nowhere to run to, and no great belief in

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running even were a place at hand, stood still in the doorway of his hut, and shortly afterwards had the exciting experience of seeing a flying piece of bomb penetrate the wooden standard of the doorway close to his head. However, it *was* the standard and not his head, and that was enough. So he dug the piece out and keeps it as a "souvenir." His experience was a lucky one compared with that of another chaplain who along with two other men was proceeding in a car to conduct a funeral. In this case the bomb dropped right on the car, killing one of the men instantaneously, seriously injuring the other, and mortally wounding the chaplain, who lingered only for a few days. Their luck, as the soldiers say, was badly out.

I remember very well my first experience of falling bombs. It was in a small town in Belgium, situated not far behind the line. My billet was on the first floor of a house situated in the main street. One morning just when getting up I was sent nearly out of my senses by a very loud crash under the window. When I thought the flying splinters had all passed I looked out and got the explanation. Two small bombs had been dropped from a German aeroplane flying at a great height overhead. The one had fallen on the street causing no great material damage, but slightly wounding a woman and two little boys. The other had gone right through the roof of a house opposite without

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exploding. It lay snugly nestling in an upstairs apartment, whence it was removed in due course by some French artillerymen.

The writer recalls several other occasions when the camp or billets where he was staying were made the object of an attack of this kind. It was very alarming but absolutely harmless. On one occasion in Belgium we were returning from an evening service. It was very dark and we were picking our way through the camp to our tents. For a few minutes we had been hearing the sound of motors overhead, and a discussion arose as to whether it was aeroplane or Zeppelin. Suddenly above the hum of the motors there developed another kind of sound, the ugly “ swish ” of things falling through the air. We had not long to wait for the explanation, for soon was heard the crash of exploding bombs.

On another occasion we had gone to bed in our billets in a little village in Artois when the Hun bethought him of paying us a few unwelcome attentions. The air became resonant with a rushing sound as of something travelling at enormous velocity, and then followed in rapid succession a series of detonations. On both occasions I went the following morning to investigate the results. What struck me was the size of the missiles which had been dropped. They were of very considerable weight, quite too large to be handled by an aviator. They must have been slung and

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mechanically released at the proper time. Another impression one recalls is the kind of hole they made in the ground. They penetrated the ground leaving a narrow opening, not much larger than their own diameter, but having descended into the earth about three feet or so they then formed a subterranean chamber an additional four or five feet in depth and three to four feet across, the whole resembling on a small scale the famous "bottle-dungeon" at St. Andrews.

But what impressed me most of all in these and other bomb-dropping aeroplane raids was the utter uselessness of the raid as an exact and reliable instrument of bombardment. A certain amount of material damage they can always cause, especially when the target is large, such as a considerable town or city. And if they do not kill people they at least produce panic and alarm. But unless the aviators descend to within short range, which it must be admitted they sometimes gallantly do, the bombardment of a definite point, the hitting of a particular mark of limited dimensions seems to be largely a matter of chance. Bomb-dropping is a very haphazard and random affair. The name "Baby-killers" is not an unfair description of the enemy when he sets out on this kind of enterprise. And one is glad to think that except by way of reprisals, the Allies have not to any great extent resorted to this method of warfare.

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One's first acquaintance with guns in action is always more or less memorable. Even in peace time there is something about salvoes of artillery that appeals to an instinct within us. But when you know that the guns are trained upon enemy positions and that their thunder is accompanied by the hurling of death-dealing and devastating projectiles, an influence is disengaged that thrills the looker-on to the depths of his being. To see guns manœuvred, to meet batteries en route, whether ordinary horse artillery, or the large howitzers or naval guns drawn by “caterpillars,” to hear them at night and to see the whole heavens lit up by their flashes, to be behind them when they fire, perhaps to be riding a restive pony in their vicinity when they open out without a moment's warning—incidents like these make a deep dint upon the memory.

Indeed the writer is hardly sure if he would not require to admit that one of his most exciting times in the line was not connected with anything on the enemy's part, whether mine, bomb, shell or mortar, but had to do entirely with our own guns. Duty occasionally takes the chaplain to the trenches at nightfall. Generally it is connected with a funeral, such as the burial of a body that has been found and that the medical officer considers should not be moved to the cemetery further down. On these occasions the journey across country from rest billets to the trenches,

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which is little more than from half-an-hour to an hour in length, is generally made in company with the transport conveying the battalion's rations, which have been cooked behind the lines and are taken up in the evening, the transport setting out at dusk, so that by the time the "Dump" is reached—the spot at the foot of the communication trenches where supplies are deposited—it has become quite dark. In the nature of things "taking up the rations" is a duty that is not altogether free from danger, as the road across is under observation and quite exposed, although shelling each other's ration parties is not as a rule indulged in by the artillery of either side. All the same, it is no time for brown study or easy equanimity when one is part of a convoy traversing in fairly good daylight this open stretch, pitted with shell holes, seamed with trenches, strewn with lengths of barbed wire, alongside the light railways and past our own batteries. Officers and men are either very silent, or, after the fashion of the boy who whistles to keep his spirits up when passing the cemetery, they rehearse the latest canteen gossip, or trot out their hoariest "chestnuts." Here you have to listen once more to the stories of the Mess-president who, having completed his purchases in the greengrocer's, confidently informs the good lady that these articles were "*pour la Messe*," and the subaltern who enquired of the French officer whether he was a "*Fumier*" at the same

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time politely offering him a cigar; and the chaplain who, leaving a billet in which he had been particularly well done for, took good-bye with the landlady in these terms, "Ah, madame, que le bon Dieu vous blesse!" By such means as these the way is shortened and the serious side of the undertaking kept in the background.

On this particular occasion nothing had happened on the journey up. When we were by the dump a few shells came over, but no damage was done. There was the usual bustle and excitement as supplies were unloaded in the darkness and handed over to the various parties, who seemed to be running about in each other's way, although under apparent confusion perfect system always prevails. And at the end of half an hour or so, night having now completely fallen, and a pitch black night at that, we set out across the open on the journey home, trusting more to a general sense of direction than any guiding landmarks that could be observed. We had reached a point which turned out to be within four or five hundred yards in front of our own guns when our conversation was suddenly cut short as, without a moment's warning, every gun in that wide sweeping semi-circle of batteries opened fire. This would have been trying enough to the nerves at any time. Even in daylight, walking on a good hard road, alone and at one's leisure, and behind the guns, one would wish

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to have a protection over the ears. But on a pitch dark night, on unknown ground, riding in a convoy on a restive horse, and with all the batteries blazing away simultaneously in one's face—all these provided the ingredients of a few moments of concentrated excitement. Hundreds of flashes blinding one's eyes lit up the darkness, to make it the next moment all the more intense. The ground seemed to rock with the united thunders of the massed batteries, while the air above was resonant with the screaming missiles tearing their way towards the enemy lines. What with plunging horses and the perils of shell-hole and barbed wire underfoot, and of telephone wires overhead, the momentary expectation of a "premature burst," and the lurking thought that perhaps the enemy would forthwith open out in retaliation, the time was hot and strenuous enough while it lasted. Fortunately this was not long. Eight or ten minutes and we had ridden through the guns and into the comparative quiet in the rear.

An explanation was forthcoming next day. For what it is worth—probably it was a "Canteen rumour," nothing more—it was that the commanding officer of the battalion was a Scotsman, who had had his windows broken in the recent Zeppelin raid. Hence the "straf." In such round-about ways does vengeance surely visit evil-doers!

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No one ever forgets his first experience of being shelled. Ours was in Belgium, and the gun at the hands of which we suffered, enjoyed the soubriquet of “ Peaceful Percy.” Why it should have received this name in preference to any other history does not relate. But all guns sooner or later undergo a christening. Indeed, this applies much more widely than to guns, as such descriptive terms as “ Duds,” “ Whiz-bangs,” “ Crumps,” “ Oil-cans ” and so on amply illustrate. But guns are among the first to receive this attention. A huge howitzer in Artois which used to shake our billet to its foundations was styled “ Big Biddy,” while two long six-inch naval guns were duly christened “ James and John.” Sometimes John went off on his own and he made the welkin ring, at other times James took up the running, and if he did not excel he at least equalled his twin brother. Occasionally they took it into their heads to fall to work together when it was “ some whisper ” as the Canadians used to say.

“ Peaceful Percy’s ” distinctive feature was the peculiar whistle of his shell. The noise which a shell makes in its flight has never been adequately described. Perhaps it is impossible to do so, as the sound varies with circumstances, and these circumstances are numerous, such as the dimensions of the shell, the weather, the position of the listeners relative to the flying projectile,

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and so on. On one point there is general agreement, that when a shell is coming straight for your immediate vicinity it makes music which is a combination of shriek, whistle, "shuffle" and "shatter," the noise of a passing tramcar, of steam suddenly going off, or of a springless cart being suddenly driven on to a causewayed road. Unfortunately close observation and the recording of impressions are somewhat difficult, because if the auditor escapes with his life, all he has heard is of such short duration as to make a proper analysis impossible.

"Percy" makes a music all his own. One hears the report of the gun, then after an appreciable interval the sound of the travelling shell, a melancholy whistle rising and falling away, like the cry of a "whaup" or the wail of a lost spirit, and then the bang of the explosion as the projectile finds its target. And by these marks "Percy" is widely known by no end of men scattered all over the British Front.

When we first made his acquaintance he was singularly methodical in his habits. He was no believer in over-work, commencing as a rule about four in the afternoon and knocking off about six in the evening, having also enjoyed an interval for tea from half-past four till half-past five. But in his brief hour of activity he managed to do a fair amount of useful work for his master, as the material damage in these Flanders villages can

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testify. Once he was silent for the space of a month, rumour having it that a well-placed British shell had put him out of action. One day however he blossomed out into life again, and sad to relate, his renewal of activity was marked by a falling into erratic ways. Peaceful (one might almost add “ Punctual ”) Percy no longer regulated his activities in accordance with a carefully observed programme. But with a disregard of law and order quite unworthy of his past, he banished the clock from his purview, and worked or idled according to no higher principle than that of personal inclination. He treated us to his unwelcome attentions at all sorts of inconvenient times. Things rapidly went from bad to worse, and when he stooped so low as to send shell-splinters over our tents at three in the morning, we thought we had had enough. For once the authorities, by some strange mental telepathy, concurred with our latent longings, and we were not sorry to be moved to what for a time at least, were happier climes.

Subsequent to this first experience of the enemy's projectiles, the visitations have been frequent, more numerous indeed than one can recall. One remembers being shelled in billets, when a very substantial projectile fell in the garden and the earth went up like a waterspout ; another took away a part of the next house ; another went over the roof and fell on a house

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across the way, injuring nobody, but blowing a man out of bed (perhaps a good service) ; another entered the O.C.'s room of a Field Ambulance further down the street, and having penetrated two walls and a floor came to rest on the hearthstone, fortunately forgetting to explode ; while still another tore its way into a stable and laid out ten horses, killing four and badly wounding the rest.

On another occasion, I had just left our Brigade Headquarters, after transacting some business in connection with the Canteen and Recreation Room, of which the Padre generally has the oversight, and was moving on towards the line of railway which ran along the foot of the village. Except three men and a motor car standing close by the Headquarters' gate, I remarked nothing special on the way, and I had left the one or two houses behind and had almost reached the railway when without warning, there came the awful "swish" and "rush" about my ears, which, once heard, is never forgotten or mistaken for anything else, and which affects one like the flashing of a drawn sword about one's head. I momentarily cowered before the descending stroke, saying to myself in the brief fraction of a second, "This is very near, is it before or behind?" when almost simultaneously there was a crash, and the earth and smoke rose from the soft ground on the road-side about thirty yards

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ahead. Calculating that the enemy was aiming at the railway, I retraced my steps up through the village. It was not the railway, however, but the village that was the target. The enemy was systematically sweeping it with two guns, his first shots being the furthest, and the range being reduced each time so that the whole village was thoroughly searched from the railway backwards. There was considerable damage to property that day, and one had also an illustration of the devastating effect of shell fire on trees, several having their higher branches lopped off as by an axe, and being completely stripped of their leaves. But much more serious than any material damage were the many casualties, among them being the three men who stood by the Brigade Headquarters, one of whom was killed by the third or fourth shell where I had seen them standing.

This village was constantly under shell fire, the enemy training his guns and opening out on it at his pleasure. Latterly its use as billets was discontinued. The climax came through the Boche electing to have a night out, and in pursuance of his game, shelling us mercilessly from an hour and a half before midnight till three in the morning. Heavy stuff it was too, those competent to speak authoritatively on such matters declaring that the shells used were very heavy, perhaps 9.2 high explosives. We had been warned in the evening that such a visitation was not

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improbable, as our guns had been working on one of the villages in their lines, and that consequently they might retaliate. But we were hardly prepared for such a demolition of buildings, such a scattering of earth, and such smashing explosions, the mere concussion of which sent one sprawling. In truth, every moment might have been one's last. All through that night, it was a case of "the little more and how much it is, the little less and what worlds away."

Many were the narrow escapes. There was a two-apartment building, in the one room of which an officer and two men were working, in the other two horses were tied up. The shell penetrated the roof without disturbing more than a few tiles, entered the temporary stable, exploded against the partition, the pieces of shell coming back against the horses and cutting them to pieces, the partition going in the opposite direction among the men, and the entire front of the building being completely blown out. And the remarkable thing is that but for shock, and a scratch or two due to flying bricks, these men escaped unhurt.

Others however were not so fortunate. Into another billet just round the corner from my own, a shell came down on eight men, of whom only one escaped, and he very seriously wounded. It was a dreadful business getting out the hardly recognisable remains from among the *débris* of

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the building. And it was a sad company that gathered round the seven graves the following afternoon, mourning the loss of gallant comrades so pitilessly done to death, and not less sad because it was the only occasion on which they had remained in the village for the night. Almost immediately after, orders came to leave the unlucky spot, and were readily obeyed. By way of speeding the parting guests, the enemy sent in a shell or two as we were riding out, managing thereby to knock two officers out of action. The following day returning to the village, to complete some business, I had a further reception of a hostile nature which made me ask myself whether I was to be killed in the place after all. But the missiles on this occasion were of the lachrymatory order, and beyond evoking the ordinary signs of emotion, occasioned no damage.

It is generally conceded that the enemy shoots remarkably well. Indeed most men on the line are agreed that if you know what he is aiming at, you may take up a position a couple of hundred yards away, and watch the result with perfect safety. This was borne out by an incident in the writer's own experience. A brother chaplain and myself were proceeding one afternoon to Arras. We had reached a point on the main road within three or four hundred yards of the city, when our attention was attracted to one of

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our aeroplanes flying backwards and forwards, towards the city and then back over our head into the country behind, and at a very low altitude. The pilot was obviously seeking a landing place, for, shortly after, he descended on the field to our right about three hundred yards away, behind a knoll which shut him out from our view. Momentarily, we discussed whether we should cross to the spot, but concluding that we had no business to do so, and would merely be gratifying our curiosity, we held on our way. We were talking common-place, remarking among other things on the calm peaceful atmosphere that seemed to wrap the city about in spite of war, when there came, taking our breath away, the significant "swish". Simultaneously the earth heaved up on the opposite side of the road. Fortunately it was a "dud" else the consequences might have been serious. A second, a third and others came in quick succession, each working its way nearer to the sought-for spot, and in less time than it takes to relate the incident, the resting aeroplane went up in flames.

It is not suggested that the German shooting is better than our own. Our soldiers have told me how resting on the lip of a crater, waiting the command to sally forth on a raid, they have watched our shells dropping unfailingly on the enemy trenches not more than fifty yards away. So that if the German artilleryman is good, the

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British is at least as good, and probably better, the truth of the matter apparently being that the modern gun in the hands of an expert is an instrument of deadly precision.

It thus becomes apparent that one does not require in this particular type of warfare to leave the beaten track in order to encounter incidents of extraordinary interest. What more interesting for example than moving with the Division from one part of the line to another. Twice over, the Division to which the writer was attached replaced the French, and to one of these moves, which took place in the depths of winter, we never ceased to look back. We recalled the uncertainty that prevailed during the days of preparation until the final orders were received, and the march-off in a snowstorm, which continued until, as one looked around on the moving columns of men and transport, the spectacle recalled the well-known prints of “Napoleon's Retreat from Moscow.” Then there was the arrival at billets, dreary habitations as innocent of furniture as the windows were of glass, and the setting out again the next morning to repeat the programme of the previous day. What *al fresco* lunches we had under the lee of a haystack or anything that broke the fury of the raging north-easter! Sometimes it was so cold that it was impossible to sit on a horse, and one had perforce to walk. Then there came the last day with its march of eighteen miles

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when not a single man of our battalion fell out, although their feet were sore and blistered, as the doctor told me. And how in the dark we approached the new line while the guns flashed a welcome to us against the skies, and lit up the columns of blue-coated, pack-laden Frenchmen marching out on their way to Verdun ! And then, dead-tired, stretching out to rest on these filthy sleeping-places before passing in next evening to the new position, one of the most historic of the whole battle-line—all these were memories that we frequently recalled, memories immortal.

And what of the mines that now went up under our gallant fellows ? The following Sunday, at the services I had lists of losses to read that seemed to bring us to the very brink of eternity. Then came the raids which our brave boys eagerly volunteered to make on the enemy trenches. "Not much doing at the Front just now !" remarks the city man to his companion as the train bears them up to town, and yet the very newspaper he holds in his hand has a Casualty List of fifty officers and a thousand men ! How are these serious losses occasioned ? The ordinary wear and tear of operations, the sniper's bullet, the enemy shell, the mortar, the insidious mine—by such means as these, employed continually over so great a length of line, and in so many different spheres of operation, the melancholy catalogues are piled up.

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But our men get some of their own back, and it is specially by their raids that they have been finding an outlet for their prowess and their spirit of adventure, and at the same time taking the measure of the enemy. It would be hazardous for anyone to attempt a precise description of a raid, but in a French newspaper there appeared recently an account of them under the general heading, "The Activity of the British Armies on the French Front." "It is the British," says this writer, "who have set the example in this class of operations, and who have also determined their type. The raiding party, armed one part with rifle and bayonet, and the other part with bombs, after an intense artillery preparation, rush across the intervening distance and drop into the enemy trench. A few minutes, and the guards are put out of action, and the dug-outs in which the enemy platoons have taken shelter are bombed and blown up. But in these few minutes the identity of the enemy regiment has been confirmed, and such useful items of information noted as the depth of the trenches or the mortar and machine gun emplacements. The raid completed, the raiding party return with all speed to their own lines." This description is very much abbreviated but it gives one an idea of the nature of the enterprise.

It was my privilege to be in close touch with a party who volunteered for and successfully carried

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through one of these raiding attacks, and I mention it simply for the sake of adding my testimony, no less to the remarkable keenness and courage of these fellows during the time of training than to their wonderful modesty after the hazardous enterprise has been successfully accomplished. For a fortnight they practised assiduously on a replica of the enemy trenches which had been laid out behind the lines, carrying through every operation to the minutest detail, and making allowance for every possible contingency, such as the putting out of action of the leader or some other important member of the party. At last the day arrived, and they drove off more in the manner of going to a banquet than of facing an exceedingly perilous undertaking. There was a heavy artillery preparation the while our boys sheltered in the lip of a crater fifty yards from the enemy waiting the word to go. Soon they were across, had finished the job, and were back again, having left not one of their own men in the enemy's trench.

The brave fellows treated the matter with comparative indifference. To enquiries as to how they got on the reply was as a rule one word, the monosyllable, "Fine." This was actually the answer given by one of the men to the General next day. "Well, my man, how did you get on?" "Fine, Sir." "What did you do?" "Well, Sir, I dropped into the trench, and I saw

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a German without a rifle, so I shot him.” “ Is that all ? ” “ Then I saw another with no bayonet in his rifle, so I bayoneted him.” Then the fellow stopped. The General, desirous to prolong the conversation, asked him how he managed to get his bayonet in. “ Fine, Sir,” was the laconic reply.

There were few however who were not deeply affected, as is shown by the following typical letter, so honouring to the writer of it, which was brought to my notice, and which I obtained permission to use, although not without much persuasion. Writing to his friends in his own simple and unaffected way this lad said : “ You must excuse me for not writing sooner. But we are just after having a hot time with the Hun, far hotter this time than the last ! I may tell you I was face to face with three Germans, but I did not let them have it all their own way. I will just tell you what I said as we ran across to their trenches : ‘ O God, if it be Thy will, be my shield ! ’ So it seems He has delivered me from shells, bullets and bayonets. I had a steel helmet on my head and a German threw a bomb and hit me on the helmet, making a hole in it, but the bomb did not burst, so you see I had God's help. When I was running back across the open, I thought I would never reach my own trench, but by God's help I did.” It is evident that in the British forces to-day there are many

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who are not unworthy descendants of Cromwell's Ironsides.

These are but a few out of the many recollections that come crowding in upon one in a period of calm after the excitements of fully a year upon the line. Like the events of a dream in the light of the morning so passes the procession of these crowded months. The transport drawing out from the friendly shores of England at nightfall, all the emotions of pride, responsibility and hopefulness that were kindled as one crossed the Channel, the landing in France and the stirring sights of the Overseas Base with its Hospitals, Ambulances, Red Cross Trains, and Steamers, Ordnance Stores, Batteries, Remount Depots, and Rest and Concentration Camps, all these come to memory unsought. One recalls the journey northwards in the slow-moving supply train, the first sound of the guns, the first sight of these dismantled batteries and forsaken villages, the motley throng of refugees of all ages and conditions being shepherded away like flocks of sheep from these scenes of desolation. There come back to the mind the pictures of guns and men pressing forward, and convoys of wounded and sick on the journey down. Then comes the descent of autumn with the fall of the leaf and early winter with its shortening days, when chilling fogs lie about the camp, and the erstwhile solid earth melts into mud, mud, mud, until

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everywhere it is an encircling sea, and the Frenchman says, “ Ah, monsieur, c'est toujours dans l'hiver une lutte contre la boue.” These were the days when one was never warm and never dry, the days of dreary marches across the fields to different parts of the line, of funerals under the cross-fire of British and enemy guns, attended by burial parties that had all the appearance of having just emerged from baths of liquid clay, a modern type of subterranean dweller and yet our brothers; they were the dark afternoons of winter when one traversed the long streets of half-demolished, sodden, abandoned towns, expecting every moment the rush of the enemy shell. One recalls the long horse-lines, the animals knee deep in the trodden mire, sleeping as they stood. The meals cooked in the open, with a shed for dining-room and an old packing box for table, and the squalid billets with their hordes of audacious rats which, at a threatened blow of a stick, only hobbled off lazily a yard or two, to turn round and stare at you, and perhaps sit on your shoulder a little later in bed. Trenches and wire and guns, moving arrays of waggons, horses and men, hovering aircraft, nightly bombardments with the morning lists of wounded and fallen—these are among one's memories; as also the consciousness of the work continually going on, each doing his appointed task with patience, confidence, and uplifted heart, until with the welcome coming

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again of spring and early summer, it began to be whispered abroad that everything was in readiness.

Recollections like these arise almost unbidden in the mind of one who played but a humble part, one who has nothing behind him save the commonplace round of an insignificant experience. These are but the tiniest drop in the mighty ocean of all this world-war's happenings. One day a Homer will arise to write its epic. Even he, when he has done never so worthily, when he has crowded his spacious canvas, when he has filled up with honest effort the wide span of his laborious years, having done his best will despair of his best. Then, it may be, his dissatisfied spirit, seeking rest, will find it in the closing lines of a greater epic still, the Story that Transformed the World. "There are also many other things . . . which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

XIV

The Silver Lining

“ Mother, with unbowed head,
Hear thou across the sea
The farewell of the dead,
The dead who died for thee.
Greet them again with tender words and grave,
For, saving thee, themselves they could not save.”
SIR HENRY NEWBOLT.

THE shadow of the aftermath, the deep shadow of pain and death, is over all the war zone, and yet one is continually being made aware of brighter features, aspects of the case that stir one's pride and admiration for our armies, and reawaken and confirm one's faith in our fellow men. I remember standing watching the enemy shells hurtling on to Vimy Ridge. All that Sunday afternoon, right on from three o'clock till ten, the bombardment lasted. Officers and men alike testified that it was one of the worst in their experience, and no wonder, because for this express purpose, so it was said, the enemy had massed something like two hundred batteries. It was a beautiful day in early summer, with

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nature in all the blush of her first loveliness. But from the whole area under shell-fire a smoke ascended such as Abraham must have seen go up from Sodom and Gomorrah, "as the smoke of a furnace." Over all the landscape it lay in black clouds, blotting out the heavens, comparable only with the murky atmosphere that lies athwart a gigantic iron-and-steel manufacturing centre. So lies the shadow of sorrow across the land where our armies operate. But just as the trench-flares burn brightest when the nights are darkest, so there are features that one seems to descry all the more clearly because of the shadow, features indeed which the darkness seems to reveal rather than conceal.

There is the lofty conception of duty with all the steadfastness and fidelity brought to their labours by the Army Medical Corps, into whose province falls the work of caring for sick and wounded. By general agreement our fighting men are in a class by themselves—the men of our Infantry Battalions who, more than any others, form the wall of flesh between us and the enemy, the Royal Flying Corps and our Artillery Brigades and Engineers. These are the aristocracy of the service, with whom none of the others, despite all their excellencies, is to be mentioned in the same breath. After these come the host of other departments, Veterinary Corps, Service Corps, Transport, Forwarding, Staff and Administrative

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Agencies, charged with highly important duties, but not exposed to the same privations and dangers as those whose work is done at or near the line of fire. In this latter class, while all are excellent, the Medical Corps comes first, because of their calling and the unparalleled opportunities afforded them of ministering to the well-being of their fellows. Sometimes when there is little doing, when there is no engagement on a grand scale, no offensive by the enemy or by ourselves, life for them proceeds at a measured and even leisured rate. And yet even then there are the daily routine duties, and the not inconsiderable task of attending to the daily flow of cases, due both to the wastage of sickness and the casualties of trench warfare, which are not slight, as anyone remembering the newspaper lists will agree. But when the routine is broken by an event of importance, an attack by the enemy or by ourselves resulting in the sending back of long convoys of wounded, then rings out the call of duty for the Medical Corps, and right loyally do they all respond, surgeons, nurses, rank and file, as the writer can testify from first-hand knowledge.

What wonderful things are done in the domains of medicine and surgery! And what singular occurrences come under one's personal observation! Here was a man shot right through the head, the bullet entering at the one side and leaving at the other. For a week he lay as dead

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without speech, sight, hearing or movement. And then the mending process seemed to commence, the faculties began to be restored, and from apparently certain death he recovered sufficiently to be sent to the Base. Here is a man shot right through the nose close up to the forehead and yet neither eye injured! "What do you think that is?" said a medical officer to me one day, pointing to a small lump under the skin on the left side of a man's neck. "I'll show you directly," continued the doctor, deftly making a tiny incision over the part. He had not gone deep when out jumped a round shrapnel bullet. It had entered by the right ear, travelled transversely downwards, missing everything vital, and had come to rest just under the skin on the left side of the neck. And these somewhat striking occurrences are but an index to the remarkable things that have been effected in the physician's and surgeon's domains. An army fever specialist told the writer that, largely due to inoculation, the safeguarding of food and the water supplies from contamination, and other sanitary measures, the proportion of fever in the armies as compared with any large town was infinitesimal. Truly when one thinks of the wonderful things that have been done in medicine and in sanitary science, and considers the signal successes that have been achieved in surgery, and especially in the domain of higher operations, one finds

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oneself asking whether the age of miracles is really past.

And through all this shines as a constant flame the enthusiasm and fidelity of the medical staff. The writer thinks of them as he has seen them during a rush, toiling on through long summer days and nights, thirty hours at a stretch, or holding out under the chill dripping canvas habitations of a muddy camp in dreary November, until, utterly worn out, they themselves have been borne out on stretchers to be taken down country for a rest. He thinks of them working away in comfortless conditions, not merely with the consummate skill of their profession, but with the tender sympathies of Christian men and women. Thinking of all this, and of the many who, brought back by their devotion from the gates of death, will recall their names with gratitude to Almighty God as long as they live, one readily accords them their full share of all the honours of war.

But that which stands out most clearly over against the haunting horrors of war's aftermath, touching it with an almost sacred radiance, is the heroic endurance of the men themselves. A lady visitor to France in the early days, impressed by this side of things, tried to give expression to her feelings and ideas, but finding the resources of the English language inadequate for the purpose, fell back upon the simple but somewhat unoriginal summary, "The men are simply splendid."

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Perhaps she did well to stop there, for one might say a good deal more without getting much nearer the truth. Time was when, for all good people, the young man was the favourite whipping-boy. For many a day to come he will now be able to look his detractors in the face. From whatever point of view we consider him—his patience under sore suffering, his unselfishness, his cheerful acquiescence in circumstances, his willingness that others in direr need should be attended to first—he is indeed “splendid,” in the true line of succession of all the chivalrous souls to whom the kingdom of the highest ever accords free right of entry.

It must not be thought that he always inhabits the heights. Even when he is very sick he sometimes keeps an eye for the main chance, and is occasionally very funny at that. A wounded man once handed the writer a note to put into an envelope and address and despatch by post. It was to an erring brother, written evidently at their mother's request, and ran something like this, “Dear John, Mother tells me you've been drinking again, and I'm sorry to hear it. Can't you see you are making a fool of yourself? Stop it at once! Think of what's it costing, man, save your money up till I come home—it won't be long—and then we can have a jolly good burst.” And not seldom under stress of sore fatigue he gets depressed. To a group of such men who

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had just come off the lines the writer remarked, as he viewed their solemn faces, "Then it was all a mistake, *we really are downhearted.*" And no one protested against the chaplain's conclusion. And not infrequently I have heard men worn out by pain and physical weakness calling out for wives or mothers.

But that is exceptional. As a rule there is quiet reliance, composure, self-control, and, what is more remarkable, such freedom from self-preoccupation as to permit them to think of others. One day a shell fell on a company of three, a young officer and two men. One of the men was killed outright, the other badly wounded, and the officer, a well-known athlete, had a leg almost shot away. When stretcher-bearers arrived the officer, although he was suffering dreadful pain, calmly directed that the injured man should be seen to first. And then, as he himself was being removed, he smilingly remarked, just before lapsing into unconsciousness, "What price football now?" And when, on another occasion, coming out of the enemy trenches after a successful raid, things began to get desperate for our lads as the Huns pressed up against our wounded stragglers, the young leader in his excitement lost patience with one of the boys who was lying in the way and keeping the others back, calling out "Oh, my leg, oh my arm," which indeed were almost shot quite off, and shouted

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out to him, "Move on there, for God's sake, haven't you still got one leg and one arm." "Ah, well, sir," was the noble reply, "if you'll turn me round on my front I'll try and crawl." And crawl he did, fifty yards or so over the rough ground, broken up with shell holes and strewn with barbed wire, under a rain of shrapnel, back to his own lines to die, but to die not in the enemy's hands, but among friends. Next day we laid him in a hero's grave.

The way in which the soldier pulls himself together to endure suffering has been alike the admiration and the humiliation of all who have spent any time at the line. The writer can never forget the cheery smile of a Scottish N.C.O., a Border lad, who, in spite of dreadful shell wounds in the back which latterly proved fatal, drew himself together and in reply to the chaplain's words of sympathy and good cheer always said, "Oh, I'll stick it all right; (and then after a pause during which he had reflected) "you know it's not myself, it's my folk at home."

Indeed the desire to keep back the full extent of his injuries and suffering from his friends at home is one of the commonest traits of the wounded soldier. A poor fellow badly smashed, but a fine-looking, brawny type of man was brought into a Clearing Station one day. After a little the Sister, realising the situation, said to him very sympathetically, "Are you married, because

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if so I think I would like to write to your wife just to tell her, you know, how you are. Don't you think so?" The man, whose mind was already wandering, was able to give the address, and then as we stood by he continued talking to himself, "What, my Nellie, the nurse would like to write to my Nellie. Very good. But not a word of this. She would break her dear little heart, my Nellie would. Oh, say anything, something trifling, a sprained ankle, a bit o' toothache or—you know." I looked round. The nurse had gone. It was too much for her. Gentleman that he was, with not a thought for self, but only that someone dear to him should be spared the shock! I looked at those dreadful wounds, and then I bowed reverently before such sublime tenderness. Next day before the wheeled stretcher on which his body lay under the folds of the Empire's flag I led the little funeral procession, honoured in walking bareheaded before such a precious burden.

Nor do our soldiers die without testifying to their faith. "One lad," writes a brother chaplain, "was 'done in.' When I spoke to him he was perfectly serene and trustful, telling me how he had made his peace with God years ago, and talking with the orderly and myself about the difference Christ makes. After I had prayed with him, he prayed not for himself but for the others in the hospital and for the work of the

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doctors and sisters. That supremely Christian act of prayer for others was his last effort here. "Oh, sir, it's all right," said a dying lad to the writer, smiling through his closing eyes, "it's all right. You know the best of this war is that it is one in which you can fight for both kings at the same time."

Contemplating man's essential greatness Emerson exclaimed :

" One ruddy drop of manly blood
A surging sea outweighs."

And there are many to whom this war has come for the purpose of re-establishing within them faith in their fellow men, just as there are also many to whom it has brought the first, last and greatest argument for Christianity, namely lives in which the Christian Gospel is seen to be a complete success.

XV

Per Crucem ad Lucem

TO THE MOURNER

“ For all through life I see a Cross,
Where sons of men yield up their breath ;
There is no gain except in loss,
There is no life except in death.”

W. C. SMITH.

STANDING by the side of our dying lads I have often felt that their chief and perhaps only regret was that the return home was being denied them, that it irked them to think that their last resting-place was to be amongst strangers. How often have they looked up into my face with beseeching eyes and murmured sadly, “ Oh, sir, I shall never see —— (their native place) again.” From their looks and tears one easily gathered that their heart’s desire was one with the Covenanter’s who sang :—

“ Bury me in Kirkbride,
Where the Lord’s redeemed anes lie,
The auld kirkyaird on the grey hill-side
Under the open sky,
Under the open sky !
On the breist o’ the brae sae steep,
And side by side wi’ the banes that lie
Straiked there in their hinmaist sleep.”

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And I have seen them after a snatch of troubled slumber opening wide their eyes as if daring to hope that perhaps their dream was true.

“ Wheisht ! did the saft wind speak,
Or a yaumerin' nicht bird cry ?
Did I dream that a warm hand touched my cheek,
And a winsome face gaed by ?
And a winsome face gaed by,
Wi' a far-off licht in its e'en,

And the tryst word was “ Kirkbride ! ”

But no, slowly but surely life ebbed away, and two or three days after we bore them forth to one of those God's acres where sleep our fallen soldiers, consecrated places that will be shrines for the Empire's children for many a year to come.

To all the mourners at home it must come as a comfort when the first sharpness of their grief is over, and the consolations of religion have done their work, to remember that their dear ones' dust has been laid to rest with all the marks of tenderness, reverence and affection. At the front there is a band of men, the chaplains, who, with a deep sense of their own personal unworthiness, have consecrated themselves to this holy office, and who regard it as the proudest distinction of their lives, that they should have been privileged to accompany our armies to the field. Thus it has happened, at any rate in the period succeeding the early stages of the war, that the fallen have been

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laid to rest in cemeteries properly set apart, with plots, rows and graves duly marked, and that all the burials are reported and registered in strict accordance with orders.

Naturally it sometimes happens that when our lads are caught in mines that go up under them, or are overthrown by heavy high-explosive shells, the instrument of their death also prepares for them their last resting-place. But as a rule it is in the British Soldiers' Cemeteries that those who have made the supreme sacrifice sleep their last sleep. Sometimes these cemeteries are close up to the lines, so close indeed that funerals are only possible under cover of night, and even then burial parties have sometimes to disperse in order to avoid falling shells. In other cases they are behind the guns close by the villages that are used as rest billets. And of course they are always to be found in the vicinity of Clearing Stations and Hospitals. But the important fact is that the "killed in action," as they are honourably described, are buried in registered graves, situated in appointed places, which mourning friends may visit after the war, and which will be maintained at the public charges by the French Government in perpetuity.

In these hallowed spots, the impressions of which will remain with one until the utmost bourne of life, reposes the dust of our glorious dead. The services near the fire line are simple but

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impressive. The chaplain is notified by the regimental Headquarters that a certain soldier (the full name and all particulars are always given) has been killed in action and that the body has been sent down by the transport to the mortuary, an extemporised shelter close by the burial-place. It is then the chaplain's duty to procure men to prepare the grave, and to see it done, to appoint the hour of funeral, and to arrange for the attendance of a burial party, which is generally composed of eight or so of the fallen man's personal friends, accompanied by an officer. From the mortuary, the body on a stretcher covered by a flag is reverently borne to the grave, over which it is laid down on supports, the men gathering round. The Scriptures are read. First is struck the note of Christian hope, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." The special circumstances are commemorated, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Hearts are uplifted in gratitude for the pledge of Immortality, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us unto a living hope." The mourners are commended to the Divine Healer, "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." And there is a glimpse of the glorious state of the departed, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," "And there shall be no more death,

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neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." And with our thoughts still dwelling with the happy warrior who has passed within the choice circle of all chivalrous souls saying, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," the body is lowered, the prayers are said, the grave is filled, mingling "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," heads are covered again, the salute is given, and the the mourners file silently away.

Afterwards the grave is marked officially with a small wooden cross on which are set forth all the necessary facts relating to the fallen soldier, such as his regimental number, rank, name and the date of death. But the hallowed spot is honoured in other ways. The fallen hero's comrades clothe the mound with fresh turf, into which, it may be, they indent a cross of white stones, or if the season of the year permit, plant flowers, primroses, violets, or wild hyacinths. Even the French country people, the few who have clung to their ruined homes, and who sometimes stand apart following the burials with tender interest, fetch wreaths of evergreen with a card marked with the words "Souvenir Français," or some other sympathetic inscription. But the outstanding mark of sympathy and regard is the cross erected by the regiment, fashioned by the men themselves, and sometimes showing

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both in construction and finish, features of artistic taste and devotional feeling. There are few graves near the line that are not honoured in this way.

Consequently the thoughts of the men have often centred round these crosses. Indeed, crosses will be among the outstanding memories of the campaign. There are the Victoria Cross of Valour, and the Iron Cross of Shame, the Red Cross of Healing, and the wayside Calvary where many a weary man has lifted up his heart. But when the war is over, the cross which will take deepest hold of the imagination, and round which in the evenings the old soldier will weave his fondest, saddest reveries, will be those little white-painted, black-lettered emblems that mark the places where comrades sleep.

Greatly daring, might not one prophesy a return to the central Cross of all, that of Jesus Christ, to the eternal truths it stands for, and to the setting up of that Cross afresh as what it really is, the Centre of the World? Once during an American tour, while walking somewhat aimlessly along a street of Boston, I was recalled from day-dreaming by the shadow of something over my head. In reality I was in front of the central Y.M.C.A. buildings, and this shadow, which I almost felt as a weight, was that of a massive cross suspended over the roadway, clasped by a giant hand, over which was inscribed

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in gilt letters the motto, "*Teneo ac Teneor.*" And many a time the incident has recurred to my mind. For near the opening of my period of service I received from a brother chaplain the gift of a tiny bronze crucifix, which I have carried with me during all the subsequent months, and many a time during the dark, when there was danger about, and there were no books at hand, and we had not sufficient composure to sit still and think, still less to hold a service, I have felt my hand close over that little cross with no end of comfort.

On many of the Calvaries in France there is set up a form of words to aid the worshipper in his devotion. It is entitled "Homage to the Cross." I have seen the British soldier with uncovered head look up towards the face of the King of Glory and then try to spell out the words underneath. Is it too much to believe that many, very many, amid the dread things of war have come with a spirit attuned to receive the message of these Calvaries, and that many, very many, have set up the Cross of Christ in their lives?

"O Venerable Cross," so runs the writing, "Symbol both of the Love of God and of the Cruelty of Man. Cross, Goal of the Life's desire of Jesus Christ, the Term of His earthly Labours, the Trophy of His Victories, the height from which He teaches the way of the Kingdom, the Altar where He is sacrificed for man's Salvation.

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Precious Cross! True Treasure of Graces, Shelter of the Unfortunate, Consolation of the Afflicted, Comfort of the Poor, Refuge of Sinners, the Confidence of those who struggle. Cross Divine! Buckler of the Church Militant, Banner of the Church Suffering, the Terror of Hell, the Key of Paradise, the Great Book of the Saints and the Elect, the Veneration of both Angels and Men. Again, O Cross Divine, receive the Homage of my Faith, my Gratitude and my Love. To Thee I consecrate myself entirely, beseeching Thee to be my Support in Pain, my Strength in Temptation, my Monitor in Doubt, my Light in Darkness, my Rule of Conduct During Life, and until my Death my Confidence and the Earnest of my Salvation."

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